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THE HOLY SPIRIT
THE PARACLETE

NEW EDITION

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HINDUISM

AND ITS

RELATIONS TO CHRISTIANITY

BY THE

REV. JOHN ROBSON, D.D.

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James Macdonald
29th January 1894

THE HOLY SPIRIT THE PARACLETE

*A STUDY OF THE WORK OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT IN MAN*

BY THE

REV. JOHN ROBSON, D.D., ABERDEEN

AUTHOR OF

"HINDUISM AND ITS RELATIONS TO CHRISTIANITY"

"THE BIBLE: ITS REVELATION, INSPIRATION, AND EVIDENCE"

"OUTLINES OF PROTESTANT MISSIONS" ETC.

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PREFACE

IT has been said that one distinguishing feature of the religious thought of this age is the earnestness with which it has turned to the study of the historical Christ. A scarcely less distinguishing feature of the thought of the Church is the earnestness with which it has turned to the study of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The one supplements the other. Unless the Church—and by this I mean the whole body of believers—be endowed with the power of the Spirit, she will be unable to bring the age under the power of the Christ whose life it is studying.

Many able books on the Holy Spirit have been published of late years, which have been helpful to myself as to others. But after reading them, many questions remained unsolved, which I felt a true doctrine of the Holy Spirit ought to satisfy. Were the apostles, for instance,

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born of the Spirit before the Spirit was given at Pentecost? How is the inspiration of the writers of the Bible to be reconciled with the imperfections and even sins of their lives? And in modern times, how is it that we see so many converted men doing so little Christian work? while, on the other hand, we occasionally see a blessing on the work of men whose lives show that they are not converted? What is it that the Church needs besides Christian life to enable her to do effective Christian service? A fresh study of the Scriptures with these questions before my mind for some time gave no satisfactory solution. At last, in the work of the Spirit in Christ, I seemed to find the solution of these and other problems. Some works on the Holy Spirit ignore His work in Christ altogether; others treat it incidentally, to show that He was no exception to the rest of mankind. But it seems to me that the work of the Spirit in Christ must be taken as the key to His work in man. Jesus Christ is the only normal man; only in Him can we see the normal work of the Spirit, and apart from Him any attempt to explain the work of the Spirit in man must be involved in haze and confusion.

I have also found the need of always studying the work of the Spirit in conjunction with the work of Christ—the two Paracletes appointed for man's salvation—and of looking to the basis of the redeeming work of the Spirit in His creative work. These are the main topics that have been taken up in the following pages. They do not contain, and are not meant to contain, a full statement of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit; but they are issued in the hope and with the prayer that, by His blessing, they may be helpful to others in studying the topics therein treated.

Chapters I., III., and IV. have already appeared, with some modifications, in the *Expository Times*.

J. R.

ABERDEEN, October 1894.

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I

The Two Paracletes—Jesus Christ and
the Holy Spirit

I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth.—JOHN xiv. 16, 17.

¶ *If any man sin, we have a Paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.—I JOHN ii. 1.*

I

The Two Paracletes

O source of uncreated light,
The Father's promised Paraclete !
Thrice holy fount, thrice holy fire,
Our minds with heavenly power inspire

THUS in the most classic of our translations of the hymn, *Veni Creator Spiritus*, the Holy Spirit is addressed. The word Paraclete is used because there is no real equivalent for it in English, and through use it is coming to be naturalised in English. But, though thus naturalised, its meaning is little understood. And this is a great loss; for there is no word which so fully or exactly expresses the office of the Spirit, and its entire response to the needs of man. A thorough examination of the significance of this word is the best introduction we can have to a study of the work of the Spirit in man.

The word Paraclete¹ occurs twice in the New Testament: once in the farewell discourse of our Lord—for though it occurs there four times,² these are so closely connected that they may for our purpose be considered one—and once in the First Epistle of John. In the one case, the word is applied by our Lord Jesus Christ to the Holy Spirit; in the other, it is applied by the Holy Spirit, speaking through the beloved disciple, to Jesus Christ. In the former case, Jesus, on the eve of leaving His disciples, knowing that they needed power for the service they had to do in the world, promised them a Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. In the latter case, the apostle who has recorded this promise, at the close of a long life of service, conscious of how much sin yet remained even in those to whom the Spirit had been given, and feeling how incomplete the work of the Spirit was alone, looked for its completion to the Paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. It was He who had been the Paraclete of His disciples while on earth; it was He who, when leaving them, had

¹ παρακλητος.

² John xiv. 16, 26, xv. 26, xvi. 7.

promised another Paraclete to abide with them for ever; it was He who was still their Paraclete in heaven.

Thus we have two eternal Paracletes, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. This common name symbolises the perfect union between the two. It teaches the first lesson we have to learn, that the work of the two is one, and that it is impossible to understand the work of the Spirit apart from the work of Christ. It also shows that no explanation of the word will be satisfactory which does not apply equally to the work of Christ and of the Spirit. We shall therefore look first at the meaning of the word as applied to both, and then show why it has come to be more specially applied, in the usage of the Church, to the Holy Spirit alone.

What, then, is the meaning of the word Paraclete? It is translated in the Gospel by Comforter, and in the Epistle by Advocate. Both of these are partially descriptive; neither is adequate. Turning to the best Greek lexicon, we find the first meaning given, "called to one's aid." This is its fundamental meaning, whatever secondary meanings it may

have ; and by taking it we get more light cast on the offices both of the Holy Spirit and of Jesus Christ than by taking any other.

Paraclete is composed of two words—*clete*,¹ which means “called,” and *para*,² which means “along with.” It thus means exactly “one who is *called along with* another,” or “one who is called to another’s aid.” More definitely, the *paraclete* is one who is called along with the *clete* to aid him. And to understand the work of the paraclete, we need to understand the position of the *clete*.

A man is called to appear before a court of justice to answer a charge made against him. He is *clete*, or “called.” But he is ignorant of the law, and unable to plead well before his judges ; therefore another is called to help him. There is no charge against this other ; but he knows the law, and he is able to state the case well ; therefore he is “called to help” the former : he is his *para-clete*. In this case the word *ad-vocate* corresponds both in etymology and in meaning with the Greek word, and expresses the function which the paraclete is expected to perform.

¹ κλητος.

² παρὰ.

Or again, a man is called on to do a certain piece of work required of him; he is *clete*. He finds that it is utterly beyond his power to do it alone; so another of greater strength is "called to aid" him in that work; he is his *para-clete*.

The word thus means, not merely a helper, but one who is called or appointed to help/ another. He may be called to help by com-forting as a comforter, by plea-ding as an advocate, by aid-ing as a fellow-worker, or in some other way, according to the needs of the case. The name does not belong to him till the office or work is assigned to him, and the office or work depends on the requirements of those whom he is called to aid.

This brief study of the meaning of the word paraclete will help us to a clear understanding of the word as applied to Jesus Christ and to the Holy Spirit. They are called to aid others. Who are these others?

Who are the *clete*, or called? That is the first question we have to answer in order to understand why the divine Paracletes are so called. And the answer is—WE are the *clete*, •

the called. Paul knew that he was such. Addressing the Romans, he speaks of himself as "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called¹ to be an apostle."² And he applies the same term to those to whom he was writing, "Among whom are ye also called³ to be Jesus Christ's; to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called³ to be saints."⁴ Again, in writing to the Corinthians, he begins, "Paul, called¹ to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called³ to be saints."⁵

In all these cases the word used is just this word *clete*. It applies to all those to whom the gospel call has come. As such we are included in it as much as Paul and those to whom he wrote; and as such we stand in need of a Paraclete. That word, then, does not imply anything abstract or independent of ourselves. It implies most essentially a response to human needs; and when we understand what these needs are—to what it is that we are

¹ κλητος (*cletos*).

² Rom i. 1.

³ κλητοῖ (*cletoi*).

⁴ Rom. i. 6, 7.

⁵ I Cor. i. 1, 2.

called—we can understand what the work of our Paraclete must be.

To what, then, are we called? That is the next question which we have to answer. In both the passages that I have quoted, Paul sums up our calling in the words, "called to be saints." When that is stated, we feel at once how utterly incapable we are in our own strength to respond to that call.

How can we know what it is to be a saint? What life, what condition, will constitute us such before God? With our corrupt understanding and perverted wills we do not know what is pleasing to God, or how we may appear holy before Him. Jesus Christ is called to help our ignorance. He has revealed to us the will of God. As the Word, He has spoken to us in Moses and the prophets, telling us the will of God; as the Incarnate Word, He has fully shown that will by His teaching, and by the example of His whole life. Thus He has come to our help, and succoured us in our ignorance of what that saintship is to which we are called.

But this revelation of what we are required

as saints to be, only makes us feel how far we are from being saints. It convicts us of guilt, and makes us feel that we are utterly unable to appear before God's judgment-seat. We have broken the holy law of God every day of our lives, we are altogether guilty, and must be condemned in the judgment, unless we have one to help us who can satisfy that law. Perfectly true. And therefore God, who has called us, has called One to give us all the help we need; the same Jesus Christ the righteous. He is our Paraclete with the Father; and having Him for such, there is now no condemnation to us.

We must not think that the help thus rendered is only a future help in a future judgment. God is judging us now — that judgment is going on day by day, and the final judgment is the summation of all. Each day we are called on, not only to do God's will, but to give an account of what we have done; and if at the close of each day we are conscious of sad shortcomings and transgressions, we have the Paraclete with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, continually making intercession for us, presenting our imperfect service perfect in

His own finished work, presenting our feeble and ignorant prayers perfect in His own infinite knowledge and strength.

Thus far the requirements of saintship to which we are called are external to ourselves—an external law which we need to have revealed, an external judgment in which we must stand. And for that work Jesus Christ is our Paraclete. But there is another, an internal work, which is needed to apply that work to us, and to enable us to carry it out in our own persons. Jesus Christ will not be the Paraclete of a man who does not accept Him as such, who does not trust His mediation, who does not seek to obey the law which He has revealed. Here, then, we seem to be as far off from the saintship to which we are called as ever. How can we believe in and trust one whom we have never seen? How can we accept the law of His word and life as our law, so contrary as it is to our natural desires? How can we ever obey a law so perfect? With hearts so prone to evil, with wills so perverted, it seems utterly impossible for us to respond to the call addressed to us to believe and obey. Perfectly true. And God, who has called us, and who

knows our weakness, has called One to help us whom He knows to be strong. He has sent the Holy Spirit to be our Paraclete, to enable us to believe, to enable us to obey, to enable us to be all that saints are called to be.

When there is any special service to which we are called, the same Spirit is our helper in it too. Paul was called to be an apostle; and he was able to be an apostle, and to do the work of an apostle, only because the Holy Spirit was called to help him, and was given him to enable him to do his work. It may be a more humble service to which any of us is called—to the ministry of the word in a small sphere, to conduct an evangelistic meeting, to teach a Sabbath-school class, to train one's own children. Humble though the work may be, we are as little able to do it effectually in our own strength as was Paul to do the work of his apostleship. So surely as we are called by God to do that service, is the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, called to help us in it; and if we ask Him from God, He will be given to us for it.

Thus, as we examine the call addressed to us by God, a double need becomes apparent—

the need of a revelation of God's purpose and will, the need of power to trust that purpose and to do that will. This double need in our humanity is met by the two Paracletes whom God has in His mercy called for our salvation, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Up to this point we have considered mainly the call addressed to us as the *clete*, "called" by God to be saints; and we have seen the help which Christ and the Spirit give us in responding to this call. But in the idea of a paraclete there is not only the help that he gives, but the fact that he too is *called* to give that help. His help is not merely a chance aid given at his own impulse and by his own will, but he is appointed to give that help to those who are called—appointed by him who has called them. And this condition is satisfied in the case both of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. They are both called to our help by Him who has called us, and therefore are in the full sense Paracletes. On this we do not need to dwell at much length.

We have the call to Jesus Christ stated very definitely in prophecy: "I the Lord have

called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles ; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.”¹ The very name Messiah or Christ implies anointing and appointing to the great work He has to do. Throughout the whole of Christ’s ministry we see the consciousness of Jesus Christ that He was called to open the eyes of the blind, and give deliverance to the captives of sin. The word which He more generally uses with regard to Himself is “sent”—“sent of the Father.” Instances of this will occur to all who are acquainted with the gospel narrative,² and we need not dwell on them. It is this word “sent” that is applied also to the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ speaks both of the Holy Spirit being sent by the Father in His name,³ and of His being sent by Himself from the Father.⁴ Jesus Christ did the work appointed Him to do, and having made proof of our nature and of what we in our weakness needed, He prayed

¹ Isa. xlii. 6, 7.

³ John xiv. 26.

² Matt. x. 40 ; John iv. 34, v. 23, etc.

⁴ John xv. 26, xvi. 7.

the Father and received for us the Holy Spirit. Thus sent or called by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit came to be our Paraclete.

It is not only the call addressed to the two Paracletes which makes them such for us : each is by His nature specially fitted for the office He has to perform. Our Paraclete in heaven is Jesus Christ the righteous ; our Paraclete on earth is the Holy Spirit. With God the Father in heaven there is the Man Christ Jesus to plead the cause of men ; with man on earth there is God the Holy Spirit to plead the cause of God. What gives Jesus Christ His special fitness to be our representative with the Father is not merely His righteousness, but His humanity. Had He not been a partaker of our nature we could not have had the confidence in Him that we have ; nor—be it said with all reverence—could He have pleaded our cause with the sympathy which we know He has through experience. What gives the Holy Spirit His special fitness to be God's representative with us is that He is God. If for this work anyone less than divine had been appointed we could not have had confidence

that by His help we might learn God's will and have strength to obey it. Thus we see that not only by their calling, but by their nature, they are fitted to be our helpers in the work of salvation.

That for our salvation there should be this twofold power provided is quite in keeping with all God's work in man, in things material as well as spiritual. In bestowing sight on man, for instance, two things are necessary: light without, and the power of vision within. Go into a hall filled with the finest works of art, but from which every ray of light is excluded, it will be to you as though it were empty, nought will be visible but surrounding darkness. Why? Because though you have the power of vision, there is no light to enable you to exercise it. Open the windows, let in the rays of the sun, and all the art treasures stand revealed to your gaze. But let a blind man come into the room, and they will be to him invisible, because though the light is shining on them, the power of vision is wanting in him. So it is in the spiritual world. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. He has re-

vealed God to man, and man to himself. He has by His teaching and His death proclaimed the forgiveness of sins. He has shown man the true ideal of human life, and how that ideal is to be attained. He has in His resurrection and ascension revealed the true goal of life, and given the earnest of its attainment by all men. For eighteen hundred years that revelation has been before the world—that light has been shining, but how few have been able to see it! Why? Because the power of vision has been wanting to men. The work of the Holy Spirit is to open their eyes; this is a work that must be accomplished in each individual soul born into the world before the work of Christ in it can be accomplished.

This will come before us for detailed examination subsequently; but we may, in passing, look at one or two points belonging to the very essence of the Christian life, which may help us to understand the mutual relation of the two Paracletes.¹

Jesus Christ is the *Atonement for sin*; the

¹For a full statement of the relation between the two, see *The Scripture Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, by Dr. Clemance, ch. ii. The Two Paracletes, to which I am greatly indebted in the following passages.

Holy Spirit is the convicter of sin and of righteousness. Jesus Christ is the revelation that our sins are forgiven, that God has taken them on Himself; His death on the cross is the evidence that all their consequences have been borne. The Holy Spirit convinces us of sin, and makes us feel the need of forgiveness; He convinces us of righteousness, and makes us trust the forgiveness through Christ. Of what benefit would it have been to man that a sacrifice had been offered to take away sin, if he had not felt the need of such an offering, or if, feeling the need, he had not been able to trust it? What good would it have done to man that the Holy Spirit had convicted him of sin, if he had not known also of the forgiveness of sins, and the means by which he might secure that forgiveness?

• In the *Christian life* Jesus Christ is its rule, the Holy Spirit its power. What would be the benefit of a rule that we had no power of following, or of a power that we did not know how to direct? The example of Jesus Christ is in all respects so perfect that, when it is set before us, we cannot but feel how hopeless it is for us to try to imitate it. But the Holy Spirit is

promised to those who faithfully seek to follow that example, to teach them how to apply it to their own position, and to give them strength to carry it out in their lives. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit alone, separated from the revelation of life which has come through Jesus Christ, would impel men to a vague striving after a holiness for the attainment of which they would have no guide. The case could never really occur; but some men have fancied themselves to be so guided by the Holy Spirit that they have no need of the Word to direct them. They have become a law unto themselves, with the result of losing all holiness of life.

In *Christian work* Jesus Christ is the gospel we preach, the Holy Spirit is the power by which we preach it. The gospel of Jesus Christ is what has been committed to the Church to teach. Apart from the Holy Spirit, it has no power for salvation. It may be correctly and truly explained, it may be made the basis of an orthodox system of theology, but it will remain powerless for salvation till it is taught in the power of the Spirit, and till the Spirit blesses the teaching. When an outpouring of the Spirit comes, when a revival

takes place, the same word hitherto powerless is spoken with power, and the numbers brought to Christ are evidences that the Spirit is working through it. On the other hand, the Spirit apart from the Word can produce only a passing excitement, and no permanent results. We cannot conceive of the two really working separately, but here, even more than in the case of the Christian life, persons are apt to think they may dispense with the Word. This is a danger that is apt to follow revivals of religion. Leaders, and people too, think that because they have the Spirit they do not need the Word. That is not the prompting of the Spirit. It is the prompting of human pride, and inevitably leads to the loss of the Spirit, to fanaticism, to blasphemy, and the grossest excesses. One of the most noted examples of this in history is the case of the Anabaptists in Germany at the time of the Reformation. The Reformation was a work of the Holy Spirit through the Word. But "prophets" arose claiming to have direct revelation through the Spirit and to be independent of the Word. They drew many after them, but the movement ended in wild fanaticism and gross licentious-

ness, which roused the nation to stamp it out. In neglecting the Word, they had sinned against the Spirit, and incurred the awful consequences of so doing.

Let us not try to think of the work of Jesus Christ and that of the Holy Spirit as separate ; but let us rejoice that for the attainment of that salvation which we are called on to work out, and which seems to us so unattainable, God has called to our help these two Paracletes, whose work for us and in us so combines as to make that salvation sure to all who earnestly strive for it.

This close relationship between the two Paracletes not only helps us to understand the work of grace within us ; it helps us also to understand some passages of the Scripture which without it would be obscure. Two of these I would mention. The first is in John vii. 39, "The Spirit was not yet *given*,¹ because Jesus was not yet glorified." Two truths are here stated—that the Spirit had not yet been given, and that He could not be given till

¹ *Given* is not in the Greek, but it expresses the sense better than any other translation.

Jesus Christ had been glorified. What, then, are we to think of God's people before the coming of Christ? Had the Holy Spirit not been among them? Had there been no divine guidance, no spiritual life? Yes, there had. The Holy Spirit had worked in the world, but He had not been given to the world. He had inspired prophets; He had helped those who believed and obeyed, but He had not been given as a "gift not to be withdrawn."

We can understand this by comparing it with the gift of Jesus Christ. Had the Eternal Word done nothing in the world before His incarnation? Certainly He had: not only had He spoken in creation and in conscience, He had guided His people as the Angel of the Covenant, He had given the message to the prophets which the Spirit had inspired them to apprehend. He had worked; but He had not been given. He had come as a presence that might come or go at pleasure. But when He came in the flesh, He was given not to be withdrawn. Nothing can now cancel or reverse the fact that the Eternal Word has become a partaker of human nature,

has passed through the course of human existence from birth to death, has done the work necessary to redeem mankind, and is in glorified humanity a partaker of our nature to all eternity.

So, too, the Holy Spirit had worked before the coming of Jesus Christ, but it was not till Jesus Christ had been given and had finished His work, that the Holy Spirit was given, an abiding presence with man, to carry out Christ's work in all generations. Had He been given previously there would not have been the same full revelation of God and His purpose to apply to man, there would have been a waste of divine energy for want of a purpose on which to work. Not till the one Paraclete was given in His fulness could the other Paraclete be given in His full power to apply the work.

The second passage to which I refer is John xx. 22, "And when Jesus had said this, He breathed on *His disciples*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Had they not had any of the power of the Holy Spirit before? Or was this word fulfilled at Pentecost? We may believe that the disciples had

had enough of the grace of the Spirit before to believe, and that this word was fully fulfilled only at Pentecost. But there was a partial fulfilment now, and that to meet a partial revelation. Jesus had entered on His resurrection life, but He had not yet ascended to His Father. And to mark and apprehend what was taking place between the resurrection and the ascension a special power was needed by the disciples greater than that which they had to behold Christ's earthly ministry, though not so great as that which they needed to do the work of being witnesses to Him and evangelising the world; a power to enable them to know their risen Lord, to continue instant in prayer and in watchfulness for the fulness of power that was to come on them. The work of the one Paraclete was needed to meet the work of the other in its process as well as in its completion.

These, then, are our two Paracletes. Our Paraclete with the Father—Jesus Christ the righteous; our Paraclete who abides with us—the Holy Spirit. In their nature, their calling, their work, we see how completely fitted they

are to help our fallen nature in our calling to life and work.

At the same time, we see how the term Paraclete should have come to be habitually applied to the Spirit alone. It is just because He abides with us, and His help is a matter of experience for us. Jesus Christ is in heaven; His work is accomplished independently of us, whether we know it or not, and, till the power of the Spirit is felt, it remains outside of us. The work which we have to do is on earth; it is here that we must be brought into union with Christ, must live the life He has called us to live, and do the service He has called us to do. It is in entering on and maintaining that union, in living that life, and doing that service, that we feel the task too hard for us—one which, without divine aid, we could never accomplish. It is here that the Spirit comes to our aid, and enables us to do all that we are called on to do. Just because it is He who makes Christ's atonement a living practical fact for each one; just because it is by His help alone that we can follow the example which Jesus Christ has set us, do we think of Him as *THE* Paraclete, the divine helper.

And do we not find in this very name a fresh significance, a fresh responsibility, a fresh hope for the Christian life? That life is not distinct from the natural life. It is the same, but with another rule, another aim. Its rule is to do everything according to the will of God ; its aim is to seek in everything the glory of God. To live by that new rule, to seek that new aim, we need a new power, and that power is given in the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. For the natural life, for doing our own pleasure, and seeking our own interests, the natural powers which God has given us are adequate, and we have no promise, no hope, of the Paraclete for it. For the Christian life, for doing God's will, for seeking to serve and to glorify Him, for fulfilling our high vocation as Christians, our natural powers are wholly inadequate, and with them alone it would be hopeless to attempt it. But here we have the promise of the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, to give us the needed strength. Called as we are to live the Christian life, He is with us to give us the needed grace ; called to service, He is with us to give us the needed guidance and strength ; called to pray, He is with us to

make intercession with groanings that cannot be uttered ; called to bear affliction, He is with us to comfort us ; called to die, He is with us to quicken our mortal body into the spiritual life of the resurrection.

II

The Personality of the Holy Spirit

Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, them shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you.—JOHN xvi. 13, 14.

II

The Personality of the Holy Spirit

IN the hymn beginning—

“Spirit Divine, attend our prayers,
And make this house Thy home,”

we pray the Spirit to “come as the dove,” to “come as the light,” to “come as the fire.” These and other such expressions are figures: they are figures founded on Scripture; they are figures needful to enable us to understand the Holy Spirit and His work. We can express His true nature so little in our human speech that it is only by such figures that we can apprehend it at all. But these figures help to obscure as well as to enlighten, and lead us to think of the Holy Spirit as having no more personality than the images by which we express Him.

John the Baptist said of Jesus, “He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with

fire.”¹ We pray for the baptism of the Holy Ghost; but are we not apt to think of it as a baptism of holy fire, warming our spirits as the heat of the material fire warms our bodies? God has given the promise, “I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh.”² We pray God to pour out His Spirit upon us; but are we not apt, in doing so, to conceive of the Spirit as something like rain poured out on a thirsty soil? Jesus has spoken of the Spirit as living water.³ We pray Him to give us that living water; but are we not apt to think of it as the spiritual counterpart of that water which the woman of Samaria asked Christ to give her?

These are some of the figures which we find applied in Scripture to the Holy Spirit, and we shall often have occasion to use them in speaking of His work. All the more needful is it that we should begin by clearing our conception of the Spirit from the false notions which these figures may, if not guarded against, beget in the mind. These false ideas may not prevent the Holy Spirit from doing His

¹ Matt. iii. 11; Luke iii. 16.

² Joel ii. 28; Acts ii. 17.

³ John iv. 10, 13, 14, vii. 37, 39.

gracious work in us. But, unless we learn that He is something more than the mere image, His work cannot have free course in our spirits. The Holy Ghost is not a mere influence, a mere power, a mere enthusiasm; but a Person exerting an influence, wielding a power, awakening an enthusiasm—whom we must meet as a person, deal with as a person, trust as a person.

On the other hand, we must not think of the Holy Spirit as merely God under another name. There is a danger that we may not attribute to the Holy Spirit any more distinct personality than we do to our own spirit, which, with our soul and body, constitute our human personality. But while He is one with God even more entirely than the spirit of a man is one with the man, He is also personally distinct from the Father and the Son in a way that man's spirit is not distinct from his body and soul. If we were dealing with the question of the Holy Trinity, we might dwell on this relationship; but what we have now to deal with is the practical truth that the Holy Spirit has a personal relation to us—that He deals with us with all the authority and individuality

of a person, and that we should so deal with Him.

What do we understand by the personality of the Spirit? Let us here first ask, What do we understand by human personality? It is something more than individuality. We can apply the term individual to any member of any species of the lower animals, but we cannot apply to it the term person. What is it that raises human individuality into personality, while individuality is the highest that we can predicate of the lower animals? Obviously, that while in the latter the individual is entirely subordinate to the species, among men the individual may rise above the species. He has intellect to understand, and the will to control and guide his instincts, while the animal is entirely subject to them. The stronger and more pronounced these higher qualities are, the greater, we say, the personality is. Personality is thus the highest form of life with which we are acquainted, and if we apply the term to the divine life it is simply because we have no higher term by which to define it. It enables us to understand what it is as little as animal in-

dividuality enables us to understand what human personality is; but, as we may define personality as human individuality, so the distinction of the persons in the Godhead may be expressed as divine personality. That, no doubt, transcends human personality infinitely more than human personality transcends the individuality of the brute creation. But it is the only term we have to apply to it, and it enables us in some measure to understand the relation in which we stand to them.

Let us now consider in detail the personality of the Holy Ghost. In the first chapter we have considered the two Paracletes—Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The personality of the one, Jesus Christ, we can quite apprehend, for He has a human personality such as ours, and His may help us to understand that of the Holy Spirit. We believe that Jesus Christ is one with the Father; but He appears before us in the Bible as a person, the most distinct and perfect personality that history has seen. In this case it is not so much His personality as His oneness with the Father that we have difficulty in apprehending; in the case of the Holy Spirit it is not His oneness with the

\ Father but His personality that causes difficulty.

But let us take one aspect of the nature of Christ which at first seems quite as incompatible with the idea of personality. He is called the Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God."¹ Here we have very distinctly declared the eternity of the Word, His eternal distinctness from God, His eternal identity with God. We could hardly conceive of anything as more absolutely impersonal than a word; for we think of man's word as the outcome of man's powers of utterance, entirely dependent on them, produced when they are exerted, ceasing to exist when they are quiescent. And so, too, we might think of the Word of God as only the outcome of His powers of communication, produced when they were exerted, ceasing to exist when they were quiescent. Instead of that, we are told that the Divine Word is a Being, existent from all eternity, one with God, but distinct from Him. All this is beyond our comprehension.

John i. 1, 2.

We can understand the Divine Word being in God, but not being distinct from Him. So it would have remained forever, vague, mysterious, incomprehensible, had it not been for what is said farther on, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."¹ He dwelt among us as the Man Christ Jesus. We can see how as such He has become the Word of the Father to us far more clearly and fully than any spoken or written word could have been. We can realise also that He is a person, and the difficulty now is to understand not that He is distinct from the Father, but that He is one with Him.

Thus it is that as we look at the divine nature we can at one time see one truth clearly, at another time another truth; but when we try to reconcile both, we fail, and cannot but fail with our present powers. So it is with regard to the person of Jesus Christ; so, too, is it with regard to the person of the Holy Spirit. Our difficulties in the case of the former are just our difficulties in the case of the latter; and the light we have from the former may help us a little in understanding them.

¹ John i. 14.

Of the Spirit as of the Word we may say, "In the beginning was the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit was with God, and the Holy Spirit was God. The same was in the beginning with God." It is as natural for us to think of the Spirit as being one with God, as it is for us to think of the Word as being one with God. It is not more difficult to conceive of the Spirit having a distinct personality than to conceive of the Word having a distinct personality. We have not the incarnation of the Spirit as we have the incarnation of the Word to exhibit it to us; but this analogy may help us to understand that, as the Word is one with God and yet has a distinct personality, so the Holy Spirit is one with God and yet has a distinct personality; while, for the evidence of that personality, we must, in the case of the Spirit, look to something else than the incarnation.

What, then, are the grounds which we have for believing the Holy Spirit to be a Person as distinct as the Son? All the evidence must be found in the Holy Scriptures. Now, in them there is this difficulty, that they are the work of the Spirit, and the aim of the Spirit is to testify

to the person of Christ, not to His own person. In a good biography the personality of the biographer is not intruded. The New Testament, indeed the whole Bible, may be said to be the biography of the Son of God. The Holy Spirit is the biographer, and it is His aim to make us acquainted with the person of the Son, not with His own person. But at the same time His personality is revealed to us with evidence sufficient to convince any who study it candidly.

First, we have the language which our Lord Himself uses with regard to the Spirit. He says, "I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth."¹ He here speaks of the Spirit as being a Paraclete such as He Himself was. Again He says, "If I go not away, the Paraclete will not come unto you, but if I go away I will send Him unto you."² When among men we hear such language used—*I* and *him*—we conclude that the speaker is speaking of another man who has a personality as distinct as his own. And if human language has any meaning, the words

¹ John xiv. 16, 17.

² John xvi. 7.

of Jesus Christ can mean only that He will send another such as He is Himself—a divine person—to abide with His people.

Then in the functions and acts which He attributes to the Holy Spirit, we see in the mind of our Lord the idea of a person. He says, "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall guide you into all truth."¹ This does not necessarily imply personality, for we speak of experience too as being a guide, but what follows does most necessarily imply it—"for He shall not speak from Himself, but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak." It would be impossible to use language more clearly expressing personal action. He hears, and He speaks the things He hears, just as a faithful witness does.

With this we may connect another saying of Jesus in the same discourse, "He shall bear witness of Me, and ye shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning."² Here again it is conceivable that this bearing of witness might not be done by a person. Jesus Himself says, "The works which the Father hath given Me to accomplish, the very works

¹ John xvi. 13.

² John xv. 26, 27.

that I do bear witness of Me.”¹ But, looking at it in connection with the passage I have previously quoted, we can hardly doubt that our Lord means bearing witness as one person does of another, by telling what he has seen or heard. And this becomes certainty when we see how He joins the witness-bearing of the Spirit with the witness-bearing of the disciples. We cannot escape the conclusion that He looked to the Spirit as a personal witness, just as He looked to them as personal witnesses. They had been with Him from the beginning of His earthly ministry, and therefore could bear witness to it; the Holy Spirit had been with Him from the beginning of all things, and so could bear witness to His eternal nature.

There is one other passage in His last discourse in which our Lord speaks of the work of the Spirit: “But the Paraclete, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.”² Here again it is conceivable that the language might be used in an impersonal sense; but it is more natural to regard it as describing

¹ John v. 36.

² John xiv. 26.

the work of a person ; and when it is taken along with the other passages that I have quoted, there can be little doubt as to its meaning. We must explain passages which are somewhat indefinite by those that are definite ; and doing so, the conviction becomes irresistible that our Lord thought of and spoke of the Holy Spirit as one who had a personality as complete as Himself.

This is a truth on which our Lord alone can speak with authority, and we must therefore let His language explain that of all the rest of the Scripture. In the Old Testament, although we do not find much consciousness of this personality, there are passages which have a much more living meaning, when we read them in the light of what our Lord has revealed. And after His coming, in the experience and language of the apostles, we find evidence that for them the Holy Spirit was a person.

In the account we have of the vision which Peter had on the housetop at Joppa, we are told that after the sheet which he had seen let down had been taken up into heaven, and while he

thought on what it meant, "the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. But arise and get thee down and go with them, nothing doubting; for I have sent them."¹ There might, no doubt, be a plausible explanation of this vision from natural causes; but there can be no doubt that Peter, through whom alone the account can have come, was conscious that he received a command from a person spiritually objective to himself. And it was just at such a moment, when the teaching of the Spirit was so entirely counter to all his own previous beliefs and prejudices, that the objectivity of the Spirit would be most apparent.

Paul in writing to the Corinthians says, "But all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will."² In this there is a recognition not only of the personality but of the sovereign will of the Spirit as the true explanation of the various spiritual manifestations witnessed in the Church at Corinth.

The evidence might be strengthened by an examination of other passages, such as those in which the Spirit is spoken of as

¹ Acts. x. 19, 20.

² I Cor. xii. 11.

being tempted¹ or tried, and grieved.² But I refer further only to the apostolic benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all."³ What is communion but the speaking or fellowship of one person with another? When we seek the communion of the Holy Ghost, it is that He may have communion with our spirits, as one person may have communion with others. The language of this benediction is meaningless unless we attribute to the Holy Ghost a personality as definite as we attribute to the Father and to the Son.

This gives a more living meaning to passages in which He is spoken of in language that does not necessarily imply personality.

When He is spoken of as fire,⁴ it is the fire of a living Person, an influence going out from Him. Most of us have experienced something of what this means. We have known men the fire of whose words and example we have felt. But what is the fire? It is just the influence of the personal human spirit on

¹ Acts v. 9.

³ 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

² Eph. iv. 30.

⁴ Matt. iii. 11 ; Acts ii. 3.

others, affecting them through the ordinary means of communication, perhaps by a power which could be felt but not described. And when we speak of the Holy Spirit coming as fire, it is that He comes exerting an influence like that of fire, firing the spirit by direct contact with it.

He is spoken of as water.¹ Here again we have known of persons whose company has been refreshing and invigorating. And so, when the Holy Spirit is spoken of as water, it means that the reviving influence which He exerts is like that of water. In Hosea we have an example of a conscious personal application of an impersonal image, "I will be as the dew unto Israel."² Nothing could describe quiet, reviving influence better than the dew; nothing could more distinctly express personal action than the mode in which its coming is spoken of.

So I might go over all the figures under which the Holy Spirit is referred to, and show how these all exhibit various aspects of His influence; but each is a form of personal influence exhibited by a living Person.

¹ John iv. 14, vii. 39.

² Hos. xiv. 5.

The sum of the whole is that while there are many passages of the Bible which would be utterly meaningless if the personality of the Divine Spirit be denied, every passage in which He is mentioned has a far more pregnant meaning if that personality is assumed.

There is another source of evidence of the personality of the Spirit, namely, Christian experience; but to enter on this would be outside of my design, which is to study the Biblical testimony to the Spirit. Where this experience has been felt, it is the most convincing of all; but it has this drawback as a proof that the personal experience of each one is unknown to others, and is too sacred to pry into.

Before closing it may be well to look at some of the practical consequences of the subject we have been considering. It is obvious that our relation to the Holy Spirit must be that of one person to another. He is nearer to us than any other person divine or human. Nearer to us than either the Son or the Father, for it is through Him that we know them,—nearer to us than any person on

earth, for He comes into the very centre of our being. He is a friend closer than any earthly friend, a guide wiser than any earthly guide, a helper stronger than any earthly helper. But he is a personal friend, a personal guide, a personal helper, and we must expect that He will give His guidance or help according to the analogy of an earthly guide or helper. If we neglect or ignore an earthly friend, we cannot expect that he will be constantly coming to see us. If we welcome him, he will remain friendly ; if we habitually repulse him, he will, after some further attempts to maintain a friendship, withdraw from us altogether. A guide is ready to show us the way. If we follow him, he will continue to guide us ; but if we persist in always following the paths we ourselves choose, he will soon give up the pretence of being our guide at all. A helper is ready to help us ; but if we reject his help he will withdraw and leave us to ourselves, till, it may be, on the point of perishing, we call for his help again.

But while these analogies help us to understand our relation to the Holy Spirit, and teach us how to deal with Him, we must remember

that the relation between Him and us is one of perfect wisdom, holiness, and strength on His side, and of utter ignorance, guilt, and weakness on ours. So that the practical relation between us can only be that of authority and sovereign help on His side, obedience and dependence on ours. When we resist such a guide and helper as that, we see how disastrous the consequences must be for ourselves, and we get an intimation of how sin against Him may become unpardonable.

The Holy Spirit is God's unspeakable gift.¹ The best gift that can be sent to anyone is a good and wise friend. Such is God's gift to us ; as such let us deal with Him. Material gifts may be used when convenient, and laid aside when not wanted, without any slight being shown either to the gift or the giver. But we dare never disregard this gift of God, just as we dare not disregard any earthly friend whose friendship we wish to retain. We must deal with Him as with a friend, seeking and acknowledging the help He gives.

We pray God for His Holy Spirit ; let us pray the Spirit for Himself. When we

¹ 2 Cor. ix. 15.

approach God in prayer, let us pray the Spirit to accompany us, to teach us to pray, to make intercession for us. It is part of the work of the Spirit so to do ; let us honour Him by asking it from Him directly. By so doing we shall increase our spiritual power, and realise the personal presence of the Paraclete Spirit. And just because of this we shall be more conscious of the presence of Christ with us, more conscious of the presence of the Father.

There is the whole work of our sanctification—the work of the Holy Spirit. We pray God to sanctify us by His Spirit ; let us pray the Holy Spirit Himself to sanctify us. In conflict with temptation we pray God to help us ; let us pray the Holy Spirit, as Him who is given us and who is with us, to overcome these temptations for us. With such a recognition of His personal presence, we may go forward to the conflict of the Christian life with a far greater assurance of victory. If we fail to recognise that we have such a helper, is it wonderful that we should fail in the conflict too ?

There is the work of Christian service, of soul-winning, of soul upbuilding, to which

many are called. Do we undertake it with the conviction that we have a personal friend to help us in speaking, and to work for us in the heart of those to whom we speak? With what pleasure does a mother, anxious for the spiritual welfare of her children, ask a friend whose influence she believes will be good, to speak to them a few friendly words on things divine! Every time she speaks herself she may have the presence of the Divine Friend Himself with her, carrying home her own words. A true Sabbath-school teacher is glad when he can bring in another voice to speak words to his scholars with a power that he cannot himself command. Let him remember that every time he himself goes to instruct his class he may have with him the helper who can most powerfully influence those whom he is wishing to lead to Christ. So, too, may the minister or the evangelist have with him in speaking a personal Divine Helper to help him in his work. Is not failure to recognise this the great defect of the Church in the present day—the want in the pulpit, in the evangelistic meeting, in the church, and in the home? Much work, and devoted work, is being done,

but the fruits seem inadequate ; and why ? Is it not to a great extent because, while we recognise Jesus Christ as our personal Lord in heaven, we do not sufficiently recognise the Holy Spirit as our personal Lord on earth ? “ This ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” We need not expect the one Lord to do what He has expressly taught us to expect that the other Lord will do. We must honour the Lord the Spirit as we do the Lord Jesus Christ ; and we may hope that He will honour us by blessing our work for Christ.

III

The Holy Spirit in Creation

III

The Holy Spirit in Creation

refers only to His agency in the work of creation. The object of Moses in Genesis is to tell of the whole divine agency in that work ; so in his narrative we have the work of the Spirit recognised. He does not put Him alone. He begins by saying that God created the heavens and the earth. Then in telling how the earth was brought into its present form, he puts the Spirit of God as the agent by whom the transformation was accomplished. But he does not ignore the Word of God ; he begins his account of each epoch or each day of creation with the words "And God said." This expression "God said" is what John has expanded into the expression "All things were made by Him (the Word)." We do not, of course, find in Genesis the theological fulness that we find in the later books of the Bible. There was progress in the revelation of the truth regarding God, as in the revelation of other truths. But we do find in Genesis the elements of all we subsequently learn or deduce regarding the divine agency in creation.

It is only with this divine agency in creation that we have to do. The author of Genesis deals with the story of creation as he had it.

There was an account of creation of the same general character as that in Genesis current among the people whom he had to teach, and, when he was inspired to write his narrative, it was with this account that he had to deal. And how would his inspiration teach him to deal with it? To answer this question, we must first answer the question—What was the purpose for which he was inspired? It was to enable him to teach the truth with regard to God, not with regard to the earth—theology, not geology. He was commissioned to teach the Israelites to believe in and serve the one living and true God, and only in what bears on that has he the authority of revelation. God does not give man a revelation to teach him what he can learn by his own natural powers. He gives him it to teach the truth regarding Himself and the duty He requires from him. Had Moses been led to start with an account of creation which would have suited the science of the nineteenth century, he would have utterly unsettled the minds of the people to whom he was sent, and would have diverted their minds from the great truth he was sent to teach—a truth as needed

in our own day as in his—that the God who made heaven and earth was the God whom they were to worship. His inspiration then would give him power to see, not the processes of creation, but the divine agency in them all, and to declare it with authority for all mankind.

What, then, is the account which we have of the divine action in creation? First, there is the great primal act—"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."¹ Then there is the detailed narrative how out of primeval chaos—waste and void—the earth was brought into its present condition suited for man's abode. In accomplishing this, two agents are mentioned: "The Spirit of God brooding on the surface of the waters,"² and at each new stage of creative development the Word of God, expressed in the words "God said."

The expression with regard to the Spirit is that used of a bird brooding over her eggs. So the Spirit of God brooded over the waste and void mass which the earth then was, and by His divine energy brought out of it the order and life and beauty which now mark it.

¹ Gen. i. 1.

² Gen. i. 2.

Each step in the process is given rather as the development of what was there before than as the beginning of anything new—as though the elements were there with this power working in them, and only needed definite form to be given them. “God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, . . . and the earth brought forth grass.”¹ “And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life. And God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly.”² There is thus the Spirit of God present as a constant energy, and there is the Word of God giving form to that energy, and at each new epoch calling new forms into being.

This doctrine of the Spirit working in creation is in no way contradicted by any modern scientific discoveries or by any theory of geology. It is entirely in harmony with them all. But the doctrine of the action of the Word in creation does run counter to, at all events, one theory of geology. While one school maintains that we cannot explain the

¹ Gen. i. 11, 12.

² Gen. i. 20, 21.

facts of geology without supposing successive creative acts, such as those indicated in the narrative of Genesis by the words "God said," another, much more largely followed nowadays, maintains that all can be accounted for by the same forces that are working now, and have been in operation from the beginning; and that there have been no such acts as fresh creations in the process by which the earth has come to be what it is. If the account I have sought to give of the teaching of the Bible with regard to God's working in creation be correct, it is opposed to the latter theory. It teaches that there have been what can only be called successive creative acts. But at the same time we must allow that even if man had witnessed each of these acts with his present powers, he might not have been able to discover in it anything more than a natural process.

Let me illustrate this by one event that has come within man's own observation. The history of the seventh day of creation has yet to be written, or rather, it is being written now. When summed up it may be put in these words, "God said, Let there be righteousness,

and there was righteousness." The words "God said, Let there be righteousness," would sum up the incarnation and work of Jesus Christ; the words "and there was righteousness" would sum up the work of the Holy Spirit. But we know how utterly unable many are to see in the person and work of Jesus Christ anything more than the operation of natural causes, and how absolutely in His case they deny the Supernatural. And if men of science find science and revelation in conflict in a matter well within the range of human observation, we need not be surprised that they should find them in conflict on points beyond that range. While we accept all the facts which science discovers for us, and allow within certain limitations the theories which it bases on them, there are powers and principles behind these facts over which its authority does not extend. The facts of revelation are not opposed to science, they are beyond its sphere.¹

¹ Professor Drummond, in his *Ascent of Man*, says: "Those who yield to the temptation to reserve a point here and there for special divine interposition are apt to forget that this virtually excludes God from the rest of the process. If God appears periodically, He disappears periodically. If He comes upon the scene at special crises, He is absent from the scene in the intervals. Whether is All-God or Occasional God the

We accept, then, as a truth, that the Holy Spirit along with the Divine Word took part in the work of creation. We believe in Him as the

“Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The world’s foundations were first laid.”

We might wish to have fuller revelation with regard to the Spirit’s part in this great work. Let us be content with what has been revealed, and rather let us seek to learn some of the consequences therefrom, bearing on that great

nobler theory? Positively the idea of an immanent God, which is the God of evolution, is infinitely grander than the occasional wonder-worker who is the God of an old theology.” —Pp. 427, 428.

The old theology considers God the God of providence as well as the God of creation—the God who watches over the creation He has formed till it is prepared for a fresh creative act. The Bible teaches that God is both immanent and occasional—immanent in the Spirit, occasional in the Word. The instance quoted in the text is the crucial one, for it is the only instance within the range of human history of the divine method in creation. Through Jesus Christ, God is evolving a new creation out of the old. Does Professor Drummond believe that the birth of Jesus Christ was the work of the All-God, as he styles Him, or of the Occasional God? Was it a birth the same as that of other men, the result of merely the same forces as those through which God works in the case of other men, or was it a “special divine interposition,” “coming upon the scene at a special crisis” in the world’s history to evolve a new creation? If Professor Drummond maintains the former alternative, he is consistent throughout. If he accepts the latter alternative, is it not to be accepted as illustrative of the divine method in previous stages of creation?

work of renewal with which we have more practically to do.

If all nature, even material, is the work of the creative Spirit, we may conclude that there is a fundamental harmony running through nature. From the dead rock that is at the base of all, through the various forms of vegetable life up to animal life, and from animals to man, there runs a progressive harmony pointing to Him by whose energy it has been wrought out. Such a harmony has been recognised from a study of nature itself, without any assumption as to its origin; and such a harmony is the necessary consequence of the work being that of the Creator Spirit.

Another consequence of this creative work of the Spirit is that the material world is a type of the spiritual world. The spiritual world was first. The Holy Spirit was from all eternity; and when He accomplished His work in the material world, He did it according to the principles of His own nature. Hence spiritual law rules in the material world. Every law of matter or of material life which we discover is the type of a spiritual law. If we can read the teaching of what we see in

nature, we learn truths regarding the Spirit of whom it is the type. This is the source of the teaching in all the parables of our Lord. They are not arbitrary adaptations of certain resemblances; they are expositions of the fundamental harmony between the material and the spiritual, and therefore true expositions of the spiritual teaching of the material universe. Thus the evangelist applies to this teaching the words of the psalm, "I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden from the foundation (*katable*) of the world."¹ There was a foundation harmony between the material symbol and the spiritual truth; the latter lay concealed in the foundation unseen by the dull eye of man until Christ disclosed it.

Another consequence is that the material world must be suited for the development of spiritual life. It is prepared by the Holy Spirit for the abode of those in whom He was to dwell. It must therefore be suitable for their life. We have just seen that there is in it means of spiritual instruction; it is also the means of spiritual work. It is only through

¹ Matt. xiii. 35.

material means that in this world spirit can work on spirit. Speaking and hearing are such means. They are material actions, but through them the spirit may work, and they are suited for the use of the spirit in man. It is well carefully to remember this, for man is apt to think that this world can never be a true sphere for spiritual life—but must always be hostile to it. And this seems to find sanction in Scripture, “We look not at the things which are seen but at the things which are unseen, for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are unseen are eternal.”¹ This is true, but the material universe is not just as it was created by the Spirit. It is cursed by sin: the creation is subject to vanity. It is waiting to be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. When man is under the power of sin the world is for him an instrument of evil. When he comes under the influence of the Spirit, it is an instrument of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, when He comes to work through man in this world, does not come to alter the work of another but to complete His

¹ 2 Cor iv. 18.

own work; not to turn it from its original purpose, but to restore it to that purpose.

But this is all subordinate to the creative work of the Spirit in man. The brief record of the creation of man is, "God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them."¹ What constituted the image of God in man we are not told. We can learn what that image is only from observing it, and from the records which are preserved regarding it; and it is only the ruins of the image that we have to observe; the first record preserved to us regarding it is the record of its fall. The first indication we have with regard to man is, that unlike the lower creation he had the power of working along with the Creator to the attainment of the purpose of his creation; he had freedom of will, a witness to the spiritual element within him; but this will he exercised to turn aside from the purpose of his creation, and so the terrible element of sin was introduced into his nature. Thus confusion and perplexity are introduced at the very beginning, and make it almost hopeless

¹ Gen. i. 27.

to pursue the study of the work of the Spirit in man. It is no longer His creative but His renewing or restoring work that we have to consider. And in considering it we have lost the model, the ideal according to which He created man, and to which He seeks to restore him. Happily in Jesus Christ we have the design of man's creation set before us afresh, and so can understand to what end the Spirit now works. This we shall study in a subsequent chapter. Meanwhile, let us notice that there is in man's original creation an element of the divine nature, a sonship of God.¹ And however much that nature may have been perverted, its elements are still there.

¹ There are two views with regard to man's sonship: one that it has no basis in nature, that man is a creature of God as the other creatures, and has his sonship only through Christ; the other, that there is a natural sonship of man through nature, lost through the Fall, restored and perfected through Christ. To one who has studied the question in presence of two other of the great world religions, Mohammedanism and Hinduism, the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of the Son of God as Jesus Christ seems to require the latter of these hypotheses. Mohammedanism, denying the Fatherhood of God, denies the incarnation; Hinduism, holding that all creatures are equally related to God, teaches the incarnation of God in animals as well as in man; Christianity, holding the sonship of man lost through sin, teaches the incarnation of the Son of God as the Son of Man to restore and perfect that sonship.

Man's soul is not a desert, but a fair garden prepared for flowers and fruits, the soil of which has been ruined. Such a one I have seen in the neighbourhood of chemical works, the fumes of which had vitiated the atmosphere and impregnated the soil. Some flowers were still struggling to come up, showing sometimes the leaf, sometimes the bud, seldom the full flower. Certain weeds seemed to find more congenial growth there, but the garden had not been originally prepared for them.

This truth, that the creative work of the Spirit still survives in man, is one of the greatest practical importance for us. It is the basis of all spiritual work, missionary or evangelistic. Without it we cannot understand the past religious history of man, or his future possibilities. All the various religions of the world are witnesses alike of the creative work of the Holy Spirit in man, and of how that work has been ruined by sin. They are so many expressions of the yearning of man's spirit after God, for whom he was created. In some individual souls the ruin of the Spirit's creation seems to be but slight. Among the

heathen there have been individuals who seem to have had a vision of God, a sense of His law, that has made them appear like complete columns standing amid a mass of ruins, a witness to what the structure once was. Some of them have even done to a certain extent a work of restoration—like Mohammed, recalling men to a sense of the unity of God, or, like Buddha, to a sense of the nature of His law. But in the very best of them there is a sense of incompleteness which prevents their work from satisfying man's aspirations or exercising a permanent effect upon him. In others the ruin is so complete, the moral and spiritual sense so deadened, that it is impossible to realise that there ever was any work or trace of the work of the Spirit there. But there always is the craving that needs to be satisfied. When we see crowds of devotees worshipping the most hideous of idols with the most senseless or loathsome rites, we may see evidence that the original creation of the Spirit is not yet entirely annihilated. That idol is not the object for which this instinct of worship was implanted; nor are these rites the mode of expression which suits it. They are perversions, but

perversions which can never satisfy the soul. Thus all the religions of the world are a witness to the creative work of the Holy Spirit in the souls of men, a witness that they are capable of knowing and worshipping the true God. This capability will indeed avail nothing unless the Spirit does a fresh work in them ; but it is the basis of that work. In bringing the soul to worship God in Christ, He is bringing it back to that purpose for which He originally created it. And we, in preaching the gospel to the heathen, are preaching to those who by their very creation as men have power to understand and receive it ; we are using the means which God has intrusted to us to work along with the Spirit in restoring the original creation.

It is the same in evangelistic work at home. Here we have to deal not with the perversion of religion, but with the absence of religion. In some cases we seem to have not even the witness which the worship of an idol bears to the original work of the Spirit. Yet in speaking even to the most degraded in our slums, we are speaking to those in whom the Spirit has implanted capabilities of receiving the truth. However much the work of the Spirit in them

may have been defaced, and their capabilities filled with sin, these still exist ; and we may always speak to them as to those who can understand us, and who have deep in their nature a divine principle to which we can appeal.

“Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore.”

This constitutes the ground of hope that the most degraded may be raised, and the most abandoned reclaimed. And if it is only the Holy Spirit Himself that can accomplish this restoration, we may hope that He will accomplish it. His creative work is there already, and it is this work of His own that He has to restore. The creative work of the Spirit is the basis of our appeal in teaching men the truth ; His renewing work is the power to which we look to bless our words.

Thus it is that in man we find traces of the working of the Holy Spirit ; but they are broken, confused, perverted. We see aspirations which fail to find their object, powers diverted from their true sphere, a life which constantly fails of its original purpose. What was this purpose ? How does the Holy Spirit restore it ? These are the questions we have yet to consider.

IV

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Christ
the Norm of His Work in Man

Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call His name JESUS.—MATT. i. 20, 21.

Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form, as a dove, upon Him, and a voice came out of heaven, Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.—LUKE iii. 21, 22.

IV

The Work of the Holy Spirit in Christ

IF a chemist wishes to discover the action of a chemical substance in colouring water, he tries to obtain perfectly pure water; and until he does so he cannot be sure of the result. If the water he uses be impregnated with salts or any other impurity, he may form some approximation to the result, but he can never be quite sure. When once he has made the experiment with perfectly pure water, he can make allowance for the effect of foreign elements in all other cases.

So, if we wish to understand the work of the Holy Spirit in man, we must first know what is the work which He works on man in his normal or perfectly pure state. The defect, it seems to me, of most treatises on the Holy Spirit is that they deal only with His work in man as polluted by sin. And while this is the

work that concerns us as sinners, yet to make it the starting-point of an inquiry is to start from a state of disorder, which will prevent us reaching conclusions with anything like certainty. To understand the work of the Holy Spirit in man we must first note His normal working, His work in a sinless man ; and then we shall be better able to understand His work in sinful men.

The only sinless man who has ever lived is Jesus Christ. Let us then seek to trace the work of the Spirit in Him. In doing so, we look merely at His human nature. While we must ever remember His Godhead, we must not forget that He was made in all things like unto His brethren, and in His relation to the Holy Spirit while on earth He was like them too. The Holy Spirit was for Him just what He is meant to be for every man ; and in proportion as any man is like Him in receiving and being guided by the Spirit will he attain to the stature of the perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Now, there are two points at which we may say the Holy Spirit came into contact with Jesus Christ, His Birth and His Baptism : He

was born of the Spirit; He was baptized with the Spirit.

He was born of the Spirit. This was declared in the words of the angel to Mary, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee,"¹ and to Joseph, "Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost."²

In both these passages we have the declaration that Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit. The image of God, which had been implanted in the first Adam, and by him had been lost, was created anew in the second Adam, Jesus Christ. The same power which worked in creation, bringing order out of the waste and void mass, was anew working in the moral chaos to bring order out of it by begetting one man free from sin—a man as God meant him to be.

To bring out the full significance of this let us look at what Jesus Himself has said concerning the new birth: "Except a man be born anew (or from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God"³ In this, too,—the necessity

¹ Luke i. 35.

² Matt. i. 20.

³ John iii. 3.

of being born from above,—He was like all men. Yet He could not apply it to Himself. He said to Nicodemus, “Marvel not that I said unto you, *Ye* must be born from above.”¹ He Himself had no need of this new birth, for it coincided with His natural birth. Of man generally it is true that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”² In man the natural, the flesh, comes first ; and the spiritual, the spirit, comes after ; and so in man, when the spiritual birth does take place, there are two contrary elements, and the contest between them continues throughout life. But in Jesus Christ the natural and the spiritual birth were one and the same. In Him the perfect fusion took place at birth, which, in His people, will not take place till the resurrection. There were no contradictory elements in His nature to be reconciled, but perfect harmony from infancy.

And in the life thus begun, there was a perfect harmonious growth. Of the earlier years of the life of Jesus till He had attained full manhood we are told scarcely anything, but what we are told points to the harmonious

¹ John iii. 7.

² John iii. 6.

development of the whole nature. We are told that up to twelve years of age, "The Child grew, and waxed strong, becoming full of wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him."¹ Then we have the incident of His being found in the temple at the age of twelve,² with the evidence which that gives of His growth in wisdom, and of His consciousness that God was His Father. Then follows all the account we have of the following eighteen years of His life: "And Jesus advanced in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and with men."³ In this we have the account of a steady growth—growth in the physical life, growth in the spiritual life. The one was the consequence of His natural birth, the other the consequence of His spiritual birth. And as the birth in the case of Jesus was one, the growth, too, was one. There was in Him the physical and mental growth such as is seen in other men, and there was also a perfect spiritual growth such as has been seen in Him alone.

With this perfect nature, perfect in the Spirit as well as in the flesh, it might seem as

¹ Luke ii. 40.

² Luke ii. 41-50.

³ Luke ii. 51.

though He had all that He needed for doing the great Messianic work for which He was born. During these years we may believe that He received the education which Jewish children of His station usually received; that He learned the trade and did the work of a carpenter in Joseph's workshop in Nazareth; that, as He grew up, He took an interest in all the questions affecting the welfare of His town and people; that He joined in the worship of the synagogue, and in the prayers of the household. In all this His spiritual life, like His natural life, was perfect, and was ever approaching greater fulness, as the tree is perfect in its own life from the time it shoots from the seed, but is not a full tree till it grows and bears fruit. We have evidence, too, that His life impressed those nearest to Him. The instructions which His mother gave to the servants at Cana of Galilee, "Whatsoever He saith unto thee, do it,"¹ show that she had learned to trust His wisdom entirely. But we have also evidence that He gave no public intimations of His fitness for the work of the last years of His life. When He visited

¹ John ii. 5.

Nazareth, after the opening of His ministry, His preaching was an entire revelation to His fellow-townsmen. "Many hearing Him were astonished, saying, Whence hath this man these things? and what is the wisdom that is given unto this man? and what mean such mighty works wrought by His hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary?"¹ They had known Him as a good carpenter; there was no fault that they could find with His life among them; but they had never had any tokens of anything more. There was no miracle, no discourse, which they could recall, that might have led them to anticipate the prophetic work of His mature years. His birth from above had enabled Him to lead the life of a perfect man, but not to do any public work of teaching. To some He might seem to be failing in the service He owed to God and to His fellow-men. But the real lesson is that even Jesus needed power for His work, and until He received the power He did not enter on the work.

Why did He remain all these years without entering on His great work? Because—I say it with all reverence—He had not yet one

¹ Mark vi. 2, 3.

essential requisite, the Baptism and power of the Holy Ghost. Before He entered on that work He needed and He received that Baptism.

This brings us to the second stage of the Spirit's work in Christ—His Baptism. All the evangelists¹ refer to it. All unite in bearing record as to the form in which it came. The three first evangelists mention two other accompaniments of it—the heavens being opened, and the voice therefrom saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The former of these indicates the perfect perception which Jesus had thenceforward of heaven and of all that is therein; and the latter, the perfect communion which thenceforward existed between Him and His Father.

But we have to do with that which comes between these two accompaniments, and which gave their significance a permanent reality. Out of the opened heaven the Spirit was seen descending in bodily form like a dove, and abiding upon Him. What did this

¹ Matt. iii. 16, 17; Mark i. 10, 11; Luke iii. 21, 22; John i. 31, 32.

signify? Was it not just that thenceforth Jesus was indued with all the power of the Holy Ghost—power to know the truth fully—power to declare it perfectly—power to control nature and to destroy the works of the devil—power to reach and save the souls of men?

Why was the symbol of the dove chosen? The dove is one of the most patient, persistent, and gentle of all birds in brooding and bringing forth the living creature from the egg. We have seen that it¹ was under this form that the action of the Spirit in creation is spoken of—in evolving from chaos the various forms of existence and life. Under the same image He is spoken of as evolving spiritual life out of the moral chaos of man's fallen nature. In this power the Spirit came on Jesus and dwelt in Him, not to evolve a spiritual life, which already existed in Him in full perfection, but to go out from Him and through Him to regenerate a fallen world.

Now, it was this possession of the Spirit which constituted the difference between His public life and His life in Nazareth. He was baptized by the Holy Spirit for the ministry

¹ See ch. iii. p. 58.

which He was called to accomplish. He was thenceforth the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed of the Spirit. The life of the Spirit He still continued to live in its spotless perfection; but there was in this anointing something more. All his subsequent career was guided by the Spirit and accomplished in the power of the Spirit; and this we find most completely recognised alike by Jesus and by the evangelists.

After His baptism, we read that "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from Jordan."¹ This fulness of the Spirit remained with Him constantly throughout His ministry, and enabled Him to do all the work to which it called Him. We are not left to general inference only in coming to such a conclusion. We find the presence and power of the Spirit distinctly recognised at various points of that ministry.

The prelude to it was going into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. Here we are distinctly told that He was led thither by the Spirit.² When He had remained in the temple as a youth, He had remained of

¹ Luke iv. 1.

² Matt. iv. 1; Mark i. 12; Luke iv. 1.

His own impulse and desire ; but when He went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, to be thoroughly tested Himself before beginning His work for others, He was led thither by the Spirit.

The next step was going to Galilee to begin His work of teaching and healing, and this He did in the power of the Spirit.¹

Thereafter He went up to Nazareth, and when He there stood up to teach, He applied to Himself the words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor ; He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."² This description covers the whole of His Messianic work, and He attributed it all to the power which He had as being anointed with the Spirit of the Lord.

This truth He also assumed in confuting the Pharisees when they accused Him of casting out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. He replied to them, "If I by the Spirit of God cast out devils, then is the

¹ Luke iv. 14.

² Luke iv. 18, 19.

kingdom of God come nigh unto you.”¹ He was conscious that it was the power of the Holy Spirit which enabled Him to do those wonderful works which excited the astonishment and rage of his adversaries.

There is another passage in which Jesus speaks of the dwelling of the Spirit in Himself. It is of some difficulty by itself; it becomes plain in the light of the subject we are considering. He speaks of “the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, for it beholdeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: ye know Him; for *He abideth with you, and shall be in you.*”² We can understand the meaning of the last phrase, “He shall be in you”: that was fulfilled at Pentecost. But what is the meaning of the words, “He abideth with you”? The only meaning, one quite in accordance with all the tenor of Christ’s teaching, seems to me to be that He abode in Jesus and Jesus was abiding with His disciples. A short time before, Jesus had said, “Whoso hath seen Me hath seen the Father also.”³ Here He practically says, “Whoso knoweth Me knoweth the Spirit also.”

¹ Matt. xii. 28.

² John xiv. 17.

³ John xiv. 9.

If we turn to the testimony of the apostles, we find the same view of the source of Christ's power. Peter, addressing the household of Cornelius, said, "God anointed Him (Jesus of Nazareth) with the Holy Spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil."¹ Here Peter speaks of the power which Jesus had to do good and to heal as being the consequence of His being anointed with the Holy Spirit.

These passages cover the whole of Christ's ministry up to the time of His death. But it may be said that all this was only preliminary to that death, the great sacrifice by which He made atonement for sin. Regarding it, we read in the Hebrews, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God."² Here the free act of Christ in offering Himself a sacrifice to God is fully recognised, but the Eternal Spirit is also recognised as the power which enabled Him to perform this supreme act.

¹ Acts x. 38.

² Heb. ix. 14.

The resurrection was the sequel of the crucifixion, and this too was accomplished by the agency of the Spirit. This is a truth recognised rather than affirmed by the sacred writers. Paul says that Jesus Christ "was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead."¹ Again he says, "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you."² Here it is rather the agency of the Holy Spirit in our resurrection that is spoken of; but the basis on which it rests is His work in the raising up of Christ Jesus. The same truth is also recognised in the words of Peter with reference to Christ, "being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit."³ These passages indicate the agency of the Spirit in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. While it was the Father who raised Him, yet He did so by giving Him the power to rise, and this power was the power of the Holy Spirit.

After His resurrection, one great work on

¹ Rom. i. 4.

² Rom. viii. 11.

³ 1 Pet. iii. 18.

earth remained for Him to do, and that was to give His apostles the commission to carry on His work. With regard to that, too, we read that before being received up "He had given commandment through the Holy Ghost unto the apostles whom He had chosen."¹ So that in this final act on earth—in the beginning of the resurrection-life—the Holy Spirit was still His guide and power.

It may be said that these passages are disconnected and taken away from the context. But it is only in such a way that we can get light on such a truth as this. For it is not one that is formally taught in Scripture. It is assumed as existing, and is therefore referred to only incidentally. And this gives it more weight, for it shows that Christ and His apostles alike assumed as a truth which did not need to be affirmed, because never doubted, that the source of Christ's power was His being anointed with the Holy Spirit. And we see that in the whole of His public ministry, from His baptism unto the day that He was received up, from His first going into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil on to His giving His

¹ Acts i. 2.

final commandment to His apostles, He did all by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Summing up, then, the work of the Spirit in Jesus Christ, we see that in His life there were two periods: the first dating from His birth, when, born of the Holy Spirit, He lived the life of the Spirit—the same life which His brethren of mankind were called to lead, but which He alone led perfectly; the second dating from His baptism, when, in addition to the life of the Spirit, He had the baptism, the anointing of the Spirit, and by it did the work of the kingdom of God, the ministry for which He came to earth.

This is the only instance we have of the work of the Holy Spirit in a perfect man, and by its light we must seek to understand the work of the Spirit in sinful men.

Does it cast any light on the original design of the Spirit in the creation of man? That design, we have seen, was ruined by the Fall, and from the ruins we can hardly judge what the ultimate end was to have been. What does the example of Jesus show with regard to

it? He was the second Adam, and from Him we may learn something of what the life of the first Adam was meant to be. And we learn this: that, for the completion of the purpose of His life, divine power—the power of the Holy Spirit—was needful. The second Adam could not accomplish His life-work without it; as little could the first Adam have done so. In the glimpses we get of communion with God in Eden, we have traces of this power and guidance. Had Adam yielded to it as completely as Christ did, the aim of his life would have been accomplished. But when he disobeyed and followed other guidance, he ruptured that union by which alone his life could be guided to its true issue, and fell into that disorder and death which has overtaken all his descendants.¹

¹ Does the instance of Jesus give any indication as to what the issue of Adam's life and that of his children would have been had he remained in communion with the Spirit? The answer to this we get, I think, in the Transfiguration of Christ. That was the termination of the first part of His ministry. Having lived a perfect life and done a perfect work, the appropriate end was that He should enter heaven without tasting of death. And in the scene of the Transfiguration He seems to have come to the very gate of heaven, when He could have stepped in and quitted this world for ever. So we may believe the life of Adam would have ended had he remained perfect.

But if the life of Jesus had ended thus it would only have

More important is the practical question as to the light which Christ's example casts on the work of the Spirit in sinful man.

As in Jesus Christ, so in man we may look for the birth and the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We may expect that the birth should precede the baptism, that the baptism should always follow the birth, and that it should never come except on the foundation of the spiritual birth and life.

But here comes in the disturbing element of man's sin and fall. Man, as born into the world, is void of that spiritual element which Christ had in full power. His spiritual nature is warped, tainted, ruined, and incapable in itself of the divine life. The spiritual birth for him must be a new birth—a divine power coming into him restoring the spiritual sense, and quickening from the spiritual death. Thus the act by which the spiritual birth is produced

shown us what we had lost, and not how we may regain it. So He came down from the Mount of Transfiguration to begin His ministry of suffering, and to accomplish His decease at Jerusalem; not only that He might make atonement for the sins of the sons of Adam, but that He might show them how they too, by the power of the same Spirit which strengthened Him, might even, through the path of death, attain the eternal inheritance of heaven.

in man is of itself somewhat of the nature of a baptism—a power coming on him from without, not a power that is part of his own nature. And all the elements of the man's nature, all the circumstances in which the Spirit accomplishes His regenerating work, must be taken into account.

It is quite possible that in the conversion of a sinner the birth and the baptism, the power of a new life, and the power for work in the kingdom, may seem to come almost simultaneously. In Jesus Christ, the perfect man, thirty years elapsed between the birth and the baptism of the Spirit. In the case of Paul, the greatest of His apostles, there was, as far as we can judge, an interval of only three days. In the account of his conversion on the way to Damascus¹ we may recognise the evidence of the new birth. When, three days afterwards, Ananias came to him, and laying his hands on him, said, "The Lord, even Jesus, . . . hath sent me, that thou mayest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost,"² we see the baptism of the Spirit. But the cause of this difference is not far to seek. Jesus was born an

¹ Acts ix. 3-7.

² Acts ix. 17.

infant with the human and the divine life perfect within Him. But just because it was a true human nature He had, He could not do His public work till that nature had attained its full maturity ; and when He was thus matured, the call to and the power for His public ministry were given. Paul, on the other hand, had fully matured in all his human powers, physical and mental, before the spiritual birth took place within him. The moment he received the new birth, he was otherwise fit for entering on public service. So the call to the new life and the power for the new life, the call to work for the Master and the power to work for the Master, came so near one another. So it was with Paul, and so it has been with many since.

Again, it is possible that there may be the birth and the life resulting from it, and not the baptism. If we could imagine the life of Jesus to have ended before He left Nazareth, we would have an example of this. And there are some ardent evangelistic Christians living nowadays, who, if they had lived then and beheld Jesus in Nazareth, would have said that His was not a spiritual life, because He

was doing no spiritual work. There are many Christians who are living the life of Jesus in Nazareth, not the life of Jesus in Galilee, and we need not on that account doubt that they are true children of God. There may have been no call to service, and consequently no baptism for service ; and in living the life of Christ, and thereby witnessing for Christ, they are doing all that God requires of them. Generally, to each child of God there will be a call to some service, and with the call will come the baptism ; but the service may be a humble one,—teaching one's own children, tending the sick,—true work for the kingdom, accomplished in the power of the Spirit, but unnoticed by others, and leaving the impression that there has been neither the baptism nor the work.

Finally, there may be the baptism of the Spirit without the life of the Spirit. While I do not believe that the call to service would come without the call to life, nor the power for service be given without the power for life, yet it is a very solemn and awful fact that the latter may be resisted, and the former cherished ; with the result that there may be induement of the Spirit without life in the Spirit, service in

the kingdom without being born into the kingdom. Hence we have such a character as Balaam¹ indued with the highest prophetic gifts of the Spirit, and yet living a life at enmity with God and His people. Hence we have to the present day occasional instances of men of high evangelistic power, a means of blessing to others, and yet themselves living in sin. Our Lord tells us that there will be many such, many who will say, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out devils, and by Thy name do many wondrous works?"² Yes, they had the power for service, and perhaps also the call to service, but not the life. And so Jesus says to them, "I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."² It is the new birth that is the condition of entering the kingdom of God; without that, no service, however distinguished, will avail. And it is one of the mysteries of free will in conflict with divine grace that it may resist the call to salvation and the power of salvation, and yet listen to the call to service and experience some of the power for service.

The subject we have been considering is full

¹ Num. xxii., xxiv., xxxi. 8.

² Matt. vii. 22, 23.

of encouragement, and also full of warning. When we think of the life which we as Christians have to live, and the service we are called to do, we are apt to despair under a sense of our own utter weakness. But let us take courage, and remember that, if Jesus Christ lived a perfectly holy life, it was the life of the Spirit; that if He did a perfect service, it was in the power of the Spirit. And to us, too, the same Holy Spirit may be given, enabling us to live the life we are called to live, and to do the service we are called to do.

But there is also warning. If even Jesus Christ could not do the work given Him to do, without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, how can we expect to do Christian work without it? The work which a Christian worker is called to do may be a very humble one, but however humble, he needs the Holy Spirit for it as Jesus did for His work. If there were more looking to the Holy Spirit, there would be more vitality in Christian life, and more power in Christian work.

V

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the World

And He (the Paraclete), when He is come, will convict the world in respect of sin and of righteousness and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to the Father and ye behold Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged.—JOHN xvi. 8-11.

The Work of the Holy Spirit in the World

WE have considered the work of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ, His perfect work in a perfect man, the norm of His working in all men. But all men are in an abnormal condition. Their natures have been disordered by the Fall. The Holy Spirit has first of all to deal with that disorder, and the passage quoted above from our Lord's farewell discourse tells how He does so.

It points out the sphere of His work—the world. The world here means mankind in their natural state, the state into which they have been brought by the Fall. It does not mean those who are saved or those who are lost, but those who though not yet saved are salvable; not those who are already delivered from sin or those who are already condemned, but those who though not yet delivered may be delivered. They may yield to the Spirit

and be delivered from the power of Satan, or they may resist the Spirit and be condemned for ever.

What is the work which the Spirit has to do in the world? To convict it of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. These are the points on which the preliminary work of the Spirit must be accomplished ere He can guide men into the life of holiness and service in which He guided the perfect man Christ Jesus.

These three points are just the points on which men in their natural state differ from Jesus; they are the points on which human nature has been warped from its original creation. Jesus Christ was perfectly sinless, men are sinful; Jesus Christ had a perfect righteousness, men have no righteousness; Jesus Christ looked to the favour of His Father in heaven, men look to the favour of the prince of this world. Until in these respects they are brought back to the original design of their creation, and so far brought into likeness with Christ, nothing further can be done.

Not only had man's will been perverted from its original purpose, his intellect had

been drawn aside by his will, and his conceptions on these points had been utterly darkened. Sin had come to be transgression against an arbitrary human code, righteousness the satisfaction of human ordinances, and judgment the verdict of this world. To anyone who has been any time in the mission field, dealing with heathen people who are in much the same religious position as the world was in the time of Christ, the reason of the mention of these three points is very plain. I will deal with them as they come up in succession; but, as a preliminary object lesson, we may look at the teaching of Hinduism in regard to them.

Ask a Hindu what sin is, and he will answer, "killing the cow or breaking caste." That is the universal answer. And what about murder, adultery, theft, and lying? These may be moral and civil offences, but they are not necessarily sins in the eye of religion. It depends altogether on what the man's caste is, as there is not one of these crimes which is not sanctioned by one or other of the castes in India. The first thing to be sought in the conversion of a Hindu is to awaken his mind

to a sense of sin as an offence against God and His law. When that has been done and the conscience awakened, the Hindu naturally seeks for righteousness, but he seeks it by invocations, by offerings to the Brahmans or to the idols, by pilgrimages or by asceticism. He needs to be shown that righteousness is not to be attained in that way, that it can be attained only by the grace of God forgiving his sins and giving him strength to lead a holy life. When this has been done, there remains "the prince of this world," in the guise of caste, threatening him with the loss of worldly position, of friends, of family, of everything which this world holds dear, making it the most awfully difficult decision which he has to pronounce, when called on to decide for or against Christ.

This is an extreme instance of the position of "the world" on these points, but however much modified, it will be found to be essentially the same in every case. Now, what is the work which the Holy Spirit has to do with regard to them? He has to convict the world. That is the first step: not to convert, but to convict. Conversion is, no doubt, the ultimate end, but the process through which it is reached is

conviction. This may result in conversion, in begetting the new birth, in leading to a life of service, but it may also result in hardening; and in so far as the sinner is concerned, to him is left freedom even to resist the Spirit, and on him rests the responsibility of so doing.

The exact meaning of the word translated "convict" is to "bring to the point."¹ The work of the Spirit is to make the truth so clear in these matters that there can be no doubt about it, to make the sinner feel his responsibility with regard to it, to bring him to the point so as to compel acceptance or rejection.

How does the Spirit convict? Our Lord has not left us in ignorance of this. He has told us the instrument, so to speak, by which He will convict. Here we may notice a fresh application of the truth with which we started—that the work of the one Paraclete is needed for the work of the other—the work of Christ is needful to enable the Spirit to work; and the work of the Spirit is needful to complete the work of Christ. Our Lord points to Himself as the means by which the Spirit

¹ ἐλέγξει.

could convict. The presence of Jesus Christ in the world was needful to enable the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment ; but without the work of the Spirit the coming of Jesus Christ would have been of no avail. Let us look at this as applied to each of the points in succession on which conviction is to be wrought.

1. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me." Jesus here places disbelief in Himself as the great evidence by which the Holy Spirit was to convict the world of sin. This seems at first a strange basis on which to convict the world, but as we examine it we see that it was the only one which could finally bring the world to the point.

What had there been to convict the world of sin up to the time of Christ? There had been conscience in the individual, and opinion or law in the community. Every man has a conscience. In studying the work of the Spirit in creation, we saw that by the Spirit man was made in the image of God; and though that image is ruined, it is not entirely obliterated. There is in conscience the work of the Creator Word as

well as of the Creator Spirit. There is the law of God written on the heart, testifying as to what is right and what is wrong, and there is the obligation felt to obey that law. "The Gentiles . . . having no law, are a law unto themselves, in that they show the works of the law written on their hearts, their consciences bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them."¹

Then there is social conscience, the expression of the sense of right and wrong by the community. This we see in the ethical teaching of various religions and the laws of different nations. Society generally looks at what is best for itself; and power to discover what is really best for society will discover also what is best for the individual. But when Christ came to the world, the nations of the world, like heathen nations nowadays, had come to tolerate, and that, too, with religious sanction, the foulest vices and crimes; and individual consciences had been correspondingly perverted. In the Jewish nation the knowledge of the true God had been preserved, and His law had

- ¹ Rom. ii. 14, 15.

maintained in the conscience a truer sense of sin. But even among them, carrying a burden and healing the sick on the Sabbath were reckoned greater sins than robbing the orphan and devouring widows' houses. Yet there were these elements on which the Holy Spirit could work, did work, and does still work—man's conscience, and the laws of state and of religion. But they had been so weakened that even in the hand of the Holy Spirit they were an inadequate instrument for the conviction of the world.

Jesus Christ came as a revelation of the law of God. He not only taught all that was true in man's conscience and in human and divine law. He showed its sway as it had never been shown before; He carried it out in His life as it had never been carried out; He became an example of what living God's law meant—a living Word that could not be perverted or twisted to man's own ideas—a perfect standard, for failure to conform to which the Holy Spirit could convict the world of sin.

How did the world receive that Word? It put Him to death. It might have seemed more appropriate to say that the Spirit would

convict the world of sin because it put Jesus Christ to death. But that would have been to convict only those who dwelt in Jerusalem at the time, and even to them it would have been difficult to bring home conviction. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ was the foulest crime, the deadliest sin, which the world has ever seen. But when we begin to resolve it into its elements, we find ourselves confronted by the most vulgar, commonplace crimes and errors of ordinary history. The action of the chief priests was just that of persons resolved to keep hold on power, and unscrupulously to strain every form of law to attain it, as hundreds have done in their place. The treachery of Judas is one that has often been paralleled, if we leave out of sight the character of Him to whom it was shown. The clamour of the multitude was just the ignorant enthusiasm of a crowd, under the sway for the time of its natural leaders. The complicity of Pilate was just political weakness, desiring to please a nation which had many causes to be at enmity with him. The soldiers who nailed Him to the cross were merely carrying out commands that by their oath they were bound to obey.

These were all murderers of Jesus Christ. If anyone had failed, the crime would not have been accomplished. But from the act of the soldiers, who merely obeyed orders without asking whether these orders were right or wrong, to that of the chief priests who resolutely perverted the forms of law, there is not one which does not constantly find its counterpart in ordinary history. It is only the fact that these all combined in bringing about the death of incarnate God that makes them appear so hideous. Had any one of the parties concerned really believed in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, he would have refused to take part in it, and the crucifixion would not have taken place. It was therefore unbelief that was at the root of their crime. But all who are guilty of unbelief are guilty of the same sin; it is only want of opportunity that prevents them committing the same crime. Man looks to the crime, God looks to the sin. In His sight all who do not believe in Jesus Christ are as guilty as those who nailed Him to the tree, guilty of seeking not only the death of a man but of God Himself. Hence Jesus says, "Of sin, because they believe not on Me."

That is the divine logic ; but it needs the Holy Spirit to carry it home to men's minds and convict them.

The Jews in Jerusalem never seem to have suspected that they had committed a great crime, until the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost. Then against the assembled multitude Peter brought the charge, "Him—Jesus of Nazareth—being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay."¹ These facts they knew already, but they had never been troubled by them, or felt themselves specially guilty. Yet they did not now repudiate the charge. Nay, more, while there were men of Jerusalem present in that multitude, there were also present men described as devout men from every nation under heaven, who had not been at the Passover, and might have replied, "We were not present, we were not responsible for that crime." None of them gave such an answer. They all accepted the charge, and asked what they must do to be delivered from its guilt. Why was this? Was it not the Holy Spirit convicting them of un-

¹ Acts ii. 23.

belief in their hearts, making them feel that, however different their position might be in the eyes of men, there was no difference in the eyes of God between them and the direct accomplices in the crime?

Thus it was that the Holy Spirit convicted them of sin; and thus it is that the Holy Spirit convicts men still. Whatever convictions He may produce through conscience or otherwise, it is not till the cross is preached that He can bring home to men the full heinousness of their sin, making them feel that by unbelief they incur the guilt of that greatest of crimes—crucifying the Son of God and putting Him to an open shame.

2. "Of righteousness, because I go to the Father, and ye see Me no more." Thus Jesus says that the Holy Spirit would convict the world, bring it to the point, regarding righteousness. Righteousness had been the great aim of man in all his religions. The heathen had sought it after their fashion, to the extent of giving their firstborn for their transgression.¹ The Jews had sought it through sin offerings

¹ Micah vi. 7.

and all the works of the law—though the highest spirits among them had looked behind these to the pure mercy of God. Yet withal there was a sense of guilt, a constant feeling that more needed to be done, that there was no security of God's being reconciled to man.

Jesus Christ came : He lived a life of perfect righteousness, He gave His life for the sins of men. Had all ended with His death, the world could have known nothing about righteousness, the Holy Spirit would have had nothing wherewith to convict it. There might still have been vague general hopes in the mercy and forgiveness of God, but these would have been contradicted rather than confirmed by the death of the perfectly just One, who gave His life a ransom for the unjust. But He was raised from the dead and received up to be with the Father—thus showing that the only righteousness which God recognised was that of Christ, and that for guilty man the only way of obtaining it was through Christ. The freedom from guilt which man had been seeking by sacrifice and by strict observance of the law was to be obtained only by God's free forgiveness, sealed by the raising of Christ from the dead.

This is the great fact which the Holy Spirit uses to show men how alone they can be righteous before God. Of this too we get an illustration in the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost. What was the message which Peter then gave? It was, that God had raised up Jesus of Nazareth from the dead—that God had made both Lord and Christ that same Jesus whom they had crucified. The very fact which convicted them of their awful sin showed them also God's forgiveness of their sin. In answer to their question, "What shall we do?" Peter bade them "be baptized in the name of Christ unto the remission of sins";¹ that is, he bade them, by that act, declare their faith in Christ, and in having their sins remitted—being righteous before God—through Him. Thus the Holy Spirit convinced them, and thus the Holy Spirit convinces men still. Whatever hopes He may awaken in their hearts from the mercy and love of God, it is only when they have learned that Jesus Christ has been raised from the dead that He can work conviction—can make them see that their sins are forgiven through Christ, that there is now

¹ Acts ii. 38.

no condemnation to them that are in Him, and that they must either accept Him or reject their only hope of being reckoned righteous before God.

3. "Of judgment, because the prince of this world hath been judged." We must compare this with what Jesus had said a few days before: "Now is the judgment of the world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out, and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Myself."¹ There is a judgment pronounced by God, and a judgment pronounced by man, and only when man's judgment coincides with that of God is it a true judgment. But up to this time it had been warped by the prince of this world. He had thrown his glamour over men's minds—had made them believe that worldly success was the token of God's favour—that the gifts of this world, its riches, its pleasures, its honour, its power, were to be the aim of life. Some noble minds had escaped from this low view of life and been able to see that all that this world gave was fleeting. But it was Jesus

¹ John xii. 31, 33.

Christ who showed that God's judgment was the reverse of all this—that in suffering itself there was more true power than in all the legions of Rome, that in shame itself—as understood in this world—there was more glory than in the imperial diadem. The cross has become the symbol of this revolution. To the world then it was a symbol of greater ignominy than the gallows now. To the world now it has become a sign of glory, and even the votaries of the prince of this world are fain to adopt it. It was the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead which gave the evidence that God's judgment was against the prince of this world, and that gave the Holy Spirit the means to convince men of judgment.

We see the first effects of this in the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The disciples had all things common, and they sold their possessions and goods and parted to all men according as any man had need. All that the prince of this world had taught them to esteem they now despised. They gloried in the cross of Christ, and came to count not even their lives dear unto them, so as they might be faithful to Him. The roll of the

noble army of martyrs from that day to this shows that the Holy Spirit has continued to convince men of judgment, and to lead them to choose suffering and death with Christ rather than the pleasure and honour of this world. And corrupted as the Church now is by the world, great as is the power which the prince of the world has in it, the Spirit of God to this day convinces numbers of the blessing of serving Christ for His rewards, rather than the world for those which it offers.

Such, then, is the threefold function of the Holy Spirit in so far as the world is concerned. It is a work of conviction, or of bringing it to the point. It may result, as I have before said, in conversion, or it may result in rejection of Christ and in hardening. In the case of the three thousand baptized at Pentecost we have an instance of conviction leading to conversion. But in the narrative of the Acts we have also an instance of conviction leading to hardening. Not long after Peter spoke to the multitudes he had to answer for himself before the Sanhedrim.¹ He set before the rulers the same

¹ Acts iv. 1-21.

truths which he had set before the people—that they had crucified their Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth, that God had raised Him up, that there was not salvation in any other. And they could say nothing against it. They were brought to the point regarding sin, and righteousness, and judgment. But they chose to continue in their sin, to reject God's righteousness, to despise His judgment. They tried to turn aside the witnesses of the Spirit, resisted them, persecuted them; and soon in the awful overthrow of their temple, city, and nation, they furnished an evidence that the prince of this world had been judged.

Thus it was that the Spirit when first He came convicted the world, bringing men to the point on these three great questions—sin, righteousness, and judgment. And we see that it was only through Jesus Christ that He could do His work. The Christ was there a chief corner-stone, elect and precious for some, a rock of offence and a stone of stumbling for others; but He could not be ignored, He could not be avoided; and the Spirit, when He came, compelled men to come to the point and to decide for or against Him. Through all

the centuries since then, Jesus Christ has been in the world, and the Holy Spirit has been working in the world, with the same twofold result, repentance in some, hardening in others. So it is in the present day. Every soul now as in the days of the apostles needs to be brought to the point on these same questions—sin, righteousness, and judgment; and to the same decision for or against Christ. Jesus Christ is present in the world, a fact that cannot be ignored. He is presented in His word, in the teaching of His Church, in the witness of His people. The truth so presented may be listened to, may be to a great extent understood, and yet have no effect on the life. There may be utter indifference to the real nature of sin, and a consequent heedlessness as to its forgiveness; there may be living for this world as the only object of life, and religion may come in merely as an adjunct to it. But there may come a time when conviction begins to work, when the heinousness of sin appears, when the offer of God's mercy becomes full of meaning, when the need of having a higher aim of life than that afforded by the world is felt, when the call to live for Christ and not for self is heard.

That is the Holy Spirit doing its work of conviction on the soul, forcing it to the point, compelling it to decide for or against Christ. If yielded to, it results in the new birth and equipment for service ; if resisted, it results in hardening and in the sin against the Spirit for which there is no forgiveness. These we have yet to consider.

This subject is one that has a very direct bearing on the evangelistic and especially the missionary work of the Church. The work that is to be done among the heathen is still to convince them of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Heathen nations have ideas on these points very different from what we have. We generally find among them, in a greater or less degree of power, the law written on every man's heart. But it is overlaid with other conceptions which stifle it. Of this I have already given an example in the case of the Hindus.

Now there are two very obvious duties, springing from our subject, which lie on the Church. The first is to send the gospel to the heathen. Without the knowledge of

Jesus Christ they cannot be convicted on any one of the three points on which the Spirit has to convict them. They may be troubled about sin, as many of them are ; they may be anxious to be righteous before God, as many of them are ; it is possible even that the Holy Spirit may be working upon them, producing these anxieties, and yet they may fail of coming to conviction, just because Jesus Christ, who alone can reveal what sin is, where righteousness is to be found, and what is the real value of all that this world offers, has not been presented to them. It is to His people that Jesus Christ has committed the charge of making Him known to the world. In withholding that knowledge, in not doing all they can to spread it, they are withholding from the Holy Spirit the only instrument by which He can work conviction in the minds of men.

The second duty is to pray the Holy Spirit *go* to produce this conviction. All that the Church by means of her missions can do is to present Christ. That alone is nothing unless the Holy Spirit comes to convict. We cannot but allow that the preaching of the word in our mission fields has been far in excess of the

conversions that have followed. May not this be that the Church has been relying too much on her own efforts in preaching the word, and not looking to the Holy Spirit, who alone can by that word convict the heathen of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, and so bring them to salvation in Christ?

VI

The New Birth

Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus said unto Him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.—JOHN iii. 3-5.

Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth.—JAS. i. 18.

Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth.—I PET. i. 23.

VI

The New Birth

IT is related of William First, Emperor of Germany, that while still King of Prussia he visited one day a village school, and examined the scholars. He asked one girl what were the three kingdoms of nature. "Animal, vegetable, and mineral," replied the girl promptly. "To which kingdom do I belong?" asked the king. The maiden hesitated, and then replied, "To the kingdom of God." The king was greatly moved, and answered, "God grant that I may be a true subject of that kingdom."

That girl, unwittingly perhaps, supplied the true key to understanding the nature of the kingdom of God. It is not a political kingdom, like the kingdoms of Europe, but a kingdom of nature, or rather a kingdom rising above nature though analogous to it. Citizenship in it depends not on the external relations in which one is

born, but on the internal nature with which one is endowed. We shall see its place better if instead of three we reckon four kingdoms of nature. There is the mineral kingdom at the base; above that there is the vegetable kingdom with organisation and life; above that the animal kingdom with senses and instinct in addition; and fourthly, the kingdom of man with reason and will added. This last points to a higher kingdom—the kingdom of God. Man stands between it and the animal kingdom, and has affinities with both. We can understand something of his relation to it by the relation of the animals to him. We could never think of an animal seeing any kingdom of man, even although it may see many of its insignia. I read a remark made by a child who had witnessed the great fête at the opening of the International Exhibition in Paris, but had been disappointed in not seeing the President: “Well, I have not seen the President, but I think that I have seen the Republic.” The pet dog in her lap had seen all that she saw, but it had not seen the Republic. It was beyond its power to see any such thing. It was born an animal, not a man, and so

could not see—could not enter a kingdom of man.

And from the inability of an animal to see a kingdom of man we may learn something of the inability of man to see the kingdom of God, and of the meaning of Christ's words, "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He may see its manifestations, but not the kingdom itself. There is, no doubt, in man a latent power of seeing the kingdom of God. He was made in the image of God, was at his creation born into that kingdom as his heritage. But by his fall he has fallen out of it, he has lost the power to see it and to know it. What is needful for his being able anew to have that power is simply that he be born anew. The word translated "anew"¹ means "from the beginning" or "from above." Both meanings are the same. Jesus says a man must go back to the very beginning, and receive from above the life which he then received: he must be born anew. What is this new birth, that gives us entrance into the kingdom of God? This is what we have now to consider.

¹ ἀνωθεν.

There is in all life a mystery which eludes the grasp and analysis of man. The manifestations of life we can note and classify; but what the power is that lies behind these manifestations, what life itself is, we cannot tell. As it is with life, so it is with birth, the beginning of life. Much connected with it may be explained, but the origination of the new life itself is still a mystery to man. If this is so as regards the natural birth, much more may we expect to meet with mystery in dealing with the spiritual birth. Yet we have enough taught us in the word of God and in Christian experience to enable us to understand all we need to know for practical purposes—for seeking and cherishing the spiritual life in ourselves, and seeking that it may be begotten in others.

Let us look first at the agents in the new birth. Jesus explained them to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."¹ Jesus does not put the Spirit alone, but joins the water with it as a factor in the new birth. Here, just that we may understand

¹ John iii. 5.

the work of the Spirit, we must understand the place that the water has in this great work. We must beware of any explanation which would make it merely the outer symbol of the Spirit, as though Jesus said, You have been accustomed now to the baptism of water by John, but you must not rest content with that, you must look to the reality behind that—the Holy Spirit. This is to explain away the words of Jesus, not to explain them. Jesus gives the water as a reality—an agent in the new birth, as truly as the Spirit. And when in other parts of the New Testament the new birth is treated, the Spirit is not spoken of, but the equivalent of the water is.

What, then, is the meaning of being born of water? Here we must first ask, What would Nicodemus, to whom Jesus spoke, understand by that? He was a rabbi, and to him “being born by water into the kingdom of God” was no new idea. It was by baptism that proselytes from other nations were received into the Jewish nation. The Israelites were members of the nation by natural birth, being descended from Abraham; the proselytes were “born by water” into the Jewish commonwealth, and

were thenceforward reckoned as citizens of it, and entitled to all the privileges of the sons of Abraham. John the Baptist had enlarged this idea, and had administered baptism to the Israelites also, to show that for them as well as for the Gentiles a new birth was necessary to enter into the kingdom of God.

Thus, both by the baptism administered to proselytes and the baptism of John, Nicodemus was familiar with the idea of being born by water into the kingdom of God. At the same time he saw how unreal it all was. As an earnest man, he must have seen that neither in the one case nor in the other was there any of that change of nature which would entitle it to be said of him who was baptized that he was born into the kingdom of God. And the danger is that when an earnest man sees unreality in any form or ordinance he may despise it and reject it altogether.

This is what comes out in the question of Nicodemus that elicited this reply from Jesus. Jesus had said before, "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God." That was just the problem which had been exercising Nicodemus as a teacher; but he

wished to get at a reality, not at a mere form ; so he asks, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" In this question there is far more reality and earnestness of purpose than if he had at once recognised in Jesus' words a reference either to the baptisms of the Jews or the baptism of John. There is in it the sad, almost despairing quest of human wisdom feeling the need of a new nature and not seeing how it was to be attained.

There was thus evident the tendency to despise ordinances and forms, and Jesus at once corrects this. He throws Nicodemus back on those to which he had been accustomed, and declares them to be needful but not sufficient. To enter the kingdom of God, being born of water was essential ; but it was not enough. Unless there was something besides the water, it would come to nothing. The Spirit, too, was needed : "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

Now, what is baptism? What was it for the Jewish proselyte of old? It was the introduction

to the means of grace enjoyed by the Jews. What is Christian baptism? It is the introduction to the means of grace enjoyed under the new economy. In instituting the sacrament, our Lord said to His apostles, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."¹ These words show a covenant into which Jesus enters with His disciples, for the discipling of all the nations of the world—their work was to teach them to observe all things that He had commanded; His was to be with them always. Their teaching alone would be of no effect, therefore He gives the promise which would make it effectual—"Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." And the seal of this covenant, the pledge that Jesus will be present with His disciples—making their teaching effectual, if they are faithful in teaching—is "baptizing into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

¹ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

Baptism is thus the gate to teaching, including the reading and the preaching of the word, the sacrament of the Supper, and all the means that Jesus Christ has put into the hands of His people whereby He may be made known and they may be instructed. It is a pledge on the part of those who administer it, that these means will be used, for the teaching of those that are baptized, a confession that all human teaching is in itself of no avail, and an expression of trust that the Master Himself will, according to His promise, be present to bless the teaching and make it effectual for begetting the new life in the soul.

Thus the expression "the water and the Spirit" is equivalent to "the Word and the Spirit." We are thus brought again face to face with the fact that the two Paracletes work together—that in the new birth, as in the whole work of man's salvation, the Spirit works through the Word.

In the other cases in which the new birth is referred to in the New Testament, the agent looked to is almost uniformly the Word. James says: "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a

kind of first-fruits of His creatures.”¹ So Peter says : “ Having been begotten again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the Word of God, which liveth and abideth.”² And he dwells more definitely in the opening of his Epistle on the special aspect of the Word in which the quickening power is to be found : “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy begat us again unto a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”³ Paul insists not only on this, but on his own agency in ministering the word : “ Though ye should have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel.”⁴ It is natural that the apostles should look more to the Word as that element in the new birth which was, so to speak, in their hands—and the practical lesson which it teaches us we shall consider by and by. Jesus looking at the great fact from the divine as well as from the human point of view, takes up the teaching and preaching and every means by

¹ Jas. i. 18.

³ 1 Pet. i. 3.

² 1 Pet. i. 23.

⁴ 1 Cor. iv. 15.

which the truth may be made known to man in the sweep of the expression "born of water," and adds to it with repeated insistence that power which alone can make the water and all that it signifies effective—the Holy Spirit.

The new birth does not take place without the Word. We can conceive the Holy Spirit lodging in the heart of a man or of a child. But that alone does not produce the new birth; the Spirit has only the old elements to work on. When He meets the Word in the heart, He has that new element to work on by which He can beget a new manhood. As little can the new birth take place without the Holy Spirit. There may be a thorough instruction in all the truths of Christianity; these may be firmly grasped by the intellect and yet they may remain without power on the life, because they have not been quickened by the Spirit, and the man has not been born anew.

The one work may precede the other. I have in India at the close of the hot season looked out upon the plain. It seemed nothing but a waste of dry baked earth and dust, without a vestige of vegetation. But the rains came;

and in a few days a green tinge appeared all over it, and the grass grew until it was as high as a man's head. The seeds had been lying in the scorched soil, but they could not bring forth the blade till the showers of heaven had been poured out on them. In that case there was the seed first, and the moisture afterwards. Again, after the rains had passed, I have stood by one of the large artificial lakes that had been filled by them. The water was being drawn off for irrigation, and was at the same time evaporating, leaving in the rear a stretch of black damp soil. Over this the husbandman was driving the plough, and dropping seed into the furrow. Soon the black soil was covered with green blades, which ripened into a fruitful harvest. The moisture had been in the soil, but could produce nothing till the seed had been put into it. In this case there was first the moisture, and then the seed.

So, too, the Word may sometimes be lodged in man's mind and remain there dormant and powerless for many years, till, in a day of grace, the Holy Spirit coming like the rain or the dew quickens it and transforms the life. Such cases are most frequent in this country, where

Christian truth is abundantly stored in the minds of the young. On the other hand, there may be the work of the Spirit in a man's heart before there is any knowledge of the truth. I have seen such cases in India—men in a state of anxiety, and almost desperation about sin, eagerly looking for what would give them peace in a way that I could only explain by the work of the Spirit on their souls. Whenever Christ was presented to them, they seemed instinctively to turn to Him and begin a new life.

When these two, the Spirit and the Word, meet, then their work in man is effectual, and the new birth takes place. There may not be much power manifest, or the knowledge may be far from adequate, but if both are perceptibly present at all, there is the presence of the new birth.

When may the new birth take place? There is no time in human life too early, and no time too late. We have seen that in the case of Jesus Christ the natural and the spiritual births coincided. He is the only man with whom it has been so. But in some it may take place

before it can be consciously recognised. It was prophesied of John the Baptist that he should be filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb. His spiritual growth is described as being unmarked by any change: "The child grew and waxed strong in the Spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing forth to Israel."¹ There was an example of the essential change being wrought in infancy.

And that is the experience of multitudes in Christian lands. How often do we see children who grasp the first simple lessons of the truth instilled into their minds with a vividness, and who seek to regulate their lives according to them with a simplicity, which show that they have another teacher than the earthly one, and are possessed already of another life than that which comes from the earthly birth. Many such there are who have grown to maturity, who all their conscious life have believed in Christ and sought to obey Him. And when at last they make a public confession of faith, it has not been to follow anything new, but to go with greater intentness

¹ Luke i. 80.

of purpose on the path they have already been treading. On the other hand, the new birth may take place in mature years, producing that entire change of life which is called conversion.

Conversion is often spoken of as being the same as regeneration or the new birth. But it is needful to distinguish between the two.¹ From failure to do so, persons have fallen into hurtful mistakes, both with regard to their own spiritual life and in dealing with that of others.

Conversion differs from the new birth as the effect differs from the cause. The new birth is the beginning of the new life. Conversion is the turning from the old one. Conversion means properly "turning," and so it is generally translated in the Revised Version. It is the turning which is produced in the sinner when the new birth takes place, and produces that change in his life, its aims, its tenor, which must inevitably take place if the new life continues in power. Conversion thus follows on the new birth. The change which came over

¹ "Regeneration is the infusion of grace into the soul; conversion is the exercise of grace."—Cruden's *Concordance*.

Paul on the way to Damascus¹ is called, and called appropriately, his conversion. But we are not warranted to call it his new birth. On the contrary, we have reason to believe that the new life was already struggling within him. How else can we explain the expression "it is hard for thee to kick against the goad"? The new life had been struggling within him, and by the fresh revelation of Jesus Christ acquired a power that mastered him and changed all his life. So is it when in the dead soul new life begins; it must either triumph and lead the soul to conversion, or be stifled and leave the soul to eternal death.

Another difference is that the new birth is essential for entering the kingdom of God; conversion is not. The statements with regard to the new birth are absolute: "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God";² "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God";³ "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."⁴ These statements are universal, but there are no such statements with regard

¹ Acts ix. 1-9.

³ John iii. 5.

² John iii. 3.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 17.

to conversion. The most sweeping of these shows clearly its limitations: "Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn (repent) and become as little children, ye shall in nowise enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹ This is the most universal statement of our Lord. But what of the children? They do not need to repent; they need only to continue what they are, and to develop those qualities which make them fit to enter the kingdom of heaven. And so when the new birth takes place in infancy, as we have seen it may do, there can be no conversion in the ordinary sense of the term, because there has been no life of unbelief from which to turn. There are many, and among them some of the most beautiful and devoted Christian lives, who can never remember a time when they were out of Christ. It should be the aim of all Christian parents that such be the experience of their children, and they will be more likely to be steadfast followers of Christ than if they wait for the chance of conversion in mature years.

Then conversion may be repeated, the new birth cannot. The divine life is communicated

¹ Matt. xviii. 3.

once only to the soul, but the activities of life may be called out again and again. The new life does not at once annihilate the life of the flesh. This latter may regain power, and turn the Christian into wrong paths, so that it needs a change amounting to conversion to bring him again into the 'right way. Thus our Lord said to Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat; but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not: and do thou, when once thou hast turned again (when thou art converted, A.V.), stablish thy brethren."¹ Christ does not pray that Peter may once more be born anew. His prayer was just that his regenerated life, his faith, which was its fruit, should not fail. So surely as it did not fail, but continued living even through his season of unfaithfulness, it must cause him to turn again. The faith which had been given him not by flesh and blood, but by his Father in heaven,² which had enabled him to cleave to his Master when many turned away, also made his heart melt at the look of Jesus, and return to Him in penitence,³ while Judas turned away in

¹ Luke xxii. 31, 32.² Matt. xvi. 17.³ Luke xxii. 61.

despair. There are other passages, which might be quoted to show that in the life of the disciple conversion not unfrequently needs to be repeated.¹

There is thus a clear distinction between the new birth and conversion, which we must keep in view if we would understand the various phases of the Christian life. But it is equally necessary to remember that, when the new birth does occur in mature years, it must be followed by conversion. It may not be at once,—there may be a struggle between the new and the old, a kicking against the goad,—but so surely as the life thus begotten remains living, it must sooner or later result in conversion, and the new life show itself by new conduct.

In all this there is a work of the Spirit which is beyond our grasp, and which we must accept as a fact. When Jesus called to Lazarus, "Come forth," he came forth. There was a renewal of the physical life, and the most natural consequence of it was that he who had been dead should come forth out of the tomb; but how the life was restored is a secret known only to God. So too, when in response to the call

¹ Jas. v. 19, 20; Rev. ii. 5, etc.

of the Word, spiritual life quickens a dead soul, it is the natural result that it should be converted. But as to the power which begets that life, which produces that conversion, we can only say that it is the Holy Spirit.

And now let us ask, What is the change which is called "the new birth"? We have seen that it is produced by the Word and the Spirit—that it may take place at any time from infancy onward—that conversion is one of its fruits. What are the characteristics of the change which may enable us to recognise whether it has taken place? This we may best understand by recurring to the subject of the previous chapter, the work of the Holy Spirit on the world. We saw that it was to convict the world, or to bring it to the point, on three things—sin, righteousness, and judgment. A man in whom some conviction has been wrought may reject the teaching of the Spirit on these points and remain still of the world, born only of the flesh. But when the work of the Spirit triumphs, it changes the convictions of the sinner on these three points. He regards as sin all that Jesus by His law and life has revealed as sin, grieves

over it, hates it, strives against it ; he looks for righteousness only to God's free pardon revealed and wrought out in Jesus Christ ; and, as the outcome of these two, he disowns the sway of the prince of this world, makes the aim of his life not the things which are seen, but the things which are unseen,—not the honours, pleasures, and gains of this world, but the holiness, the joys, the rewards of the service of God in the service of man. When this change has taken place, the man is born anew. The power that maintains this change is spiritual life ; its beginning is the new birth. This life is not thenceforward a thing that comes and goes, like water spilt on the ground. It is a constituent element in his spiritual nature, as bodily life is in his physical nature. It has to struggle with the old nature ; it may become at times weak like his bodily life, but it is a life which belongs to him, and which will ultimately renew his whole nature.

This guides us to the practical mode of dealing with the new birth in ourselves and others. In one respect it might seem that the question, "Am I born anew?" is as unreason-

able as the question, "Am I born?" But our natural powers do enable us to judge something of our spiritual state, and we can be conscious whether we have the motives and powers that spring from the new birth. But the practical form which this takes is, Have I the new life? It is right that we should at times examine ourselves with regard to it, but we should do so on the lines indicated by our Saviour—sin, righteousness, and judgment: whether we hate sin and resist temptation; whether we trust God's forgiveness in Christ, for righteousness; whether we are living for ourselves—which is just for the prince of this world—or for Him who died and rose again.

And what is needful for the strengthening of this life, if it is there, for begetting it, if it is not there, is the use of the word. We have seen that the apostles in speaking of the new birth speak only of the word as its author; for that was the instrument in their hands, and it is the instrument in our hands too. By it the new life may be begotten, by it must that life be sustained. It cannot be begotten or sustained without the Spirit, and the Spirit is not ours to give. But neither can it be

begotten or sustained without the word, and the word is ours to use. And if we faithfully use it, and earnestly pray for a blessing on it, we may trust that God will not withhold the Holy Spirit to bless it to our eternal life.

And in seeking the new birth for others, we must remember the same truth ; the word is the instrument in our hands, the Spirit is the power we must ask from God. We may do all we can in giving the help and stimulus which one human spirit can give to another, in convicting of sin, in leading to trust in Christ, in teaching to seek the things which are above. But to make this effectual in accomplishing what no power of man can accomplish—to cause the soul to be born anew through the word—we must look to the Holy Spirit.

The new birth introduces the subject of the new life. This has been fully dwelt on in many works on the Holy Spirit, and kindred topics. On it I do not dwell further than to say that it will in its development follow, very much the analogy of physical life. Nourished by the appropriate food of the word, strengthened by exercise, cherished by prayer,

we may hope that it will continue to grow in vigour and dominate the whole life on earth. Some have spoken of the higher Christian life as if it were different from the ordinary Christian life, but this is misleading. Christian life will become stronger as bodily life does, and its later stages will differ from the earlier as the life of the man differs from the life of the infant. The harmony of the will with that of Christ will become more entire, the realisation of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Christ dwelling in His people will become more vivid, so that the disciple can say with Paul, "I live, and yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."¹ The perfect man in Christ Jesus is the goal of the life begotten in the soul at the new birth by the Word and the Spirit.

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

VII

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

And it shall come to pass afterwards that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh ; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit.—JOEL ii. 28, 29.

He that cometh after me is mightier than I . . . He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.—MATT. iii. 11.

Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.
—ACTS i. 5.

VII

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

WE have seen that in the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus there were two stages, His birth and His baptism. That is the perfect example of the Spirit's work in man, and however much it may be in each individual case warped by the sin in man's nature, we may expect the stages to be the same. We have considered the question of the new birth and the life which springs from it, we have now to consider the baptism of the Spirit.

What is this baptism? Let us look first at what we may learn of it from the New Testament.

The first and ruling example is that of Jesus Christ Himself, which we have already studied. We saw that in His case it was the coming of the Holy Spirit on Him in such a way that it abode upon Him, that He was thenceforward

filled with the Spirit, and in its power did the whole of His Messianic work.

Let us now see how it was with the apostles. Jesus said to them, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."¹ These were men who had been born of the Spirit; they were sons of God, and had been acknowledged as brethren by Jesus Christ.² But this did not fit them for their apostolic work. They were still wanting in one equipment for it, as the Master had been for His Messianic work while living at Nazareth. But they had learned enough of the Spirit to understand that they must wait and pray for more. And as Jesus was baptized by the Spirit in coming out of Jordan, so the disciples were baptized at Pentecost. We are told that "suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."³

¹ Acts i. 5. ² Matt. xxviii. 10; John xx. 17. ³ Acts ii. 2-4.

We are here plainly told of the Spirit coming on the disciples in a distinct fashion, and conferring on them a power which they had not before. What this power was we shall consider presently. Meanwhile let us look at one or two other instances in the New Testament of this baptism of the Spirit.

The Church of Samaria presents a very definite example of these two stages in the work of the Spirit. We read first of all that "Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and proclaimed unto them the Christ. And the multitudes gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard and saw the signs which he did. . . . And there was much joy in that city."¹ So far we have a distinct account of conversion, the result of the new birth, the primary work of the Spirit, in these men of Samaria. We see this in their believing or giving heed to the things spoken by Philip, and in the joy which was its fruit. This is all that is recorded of the conversion of the eunuch in the latter part of the eighth chapter of the Acts.² It is all that is recorded of the work at Antioch: "And the

¹ Acts viii. 5-8.

² Acts viii. 26-39.

hand of the Lord was with them ; and a great number that believed turned to the Lord.”¹ Here the conversion, the turning to the Lord, is definitely recognised as the work of the Spirit—the hand of the Lord that was with the preachers. So too in all the subsequent accounts of the conversion of individuals or communities, the fruit of the new birth, conversion, is all that is recorded. It is the essential part of the work of the Spirit ; by it men enter the kingdom of God, receiving qualification for service afterwards.

So too it would probably have been in Samaria had there not been a special incident that needed to be recorded for the instruction of the Church—the sin of Simon Magus. With that we are not concerned here. But it leads to our being told that “as yet He (the Holy Ghost) was fallen on none of them : only they had been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus.”² They had experienced the power of the Spirit begetting them to a faith and joy in Christ, but the Spirit had not yet “fallen upon them,” the *baptism of the Spirit* had not yet come. Of that baptism we read that it came

¹ Acts xi. 21.

² Acts viii. 16.

as a consequence of the visit of Peter and John, "who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. . . . Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost"¹ What the fruit of their receiving the Holy Ghost was we are not told, but we may conclude that it was the same as that of the gift at Pentecost, that they spake with tongues.

One instance we do have of the baptism preceding or accompanying conversion,—in so far as we can judge,—and that is in the household of Cornelius. Regarding it we read, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were amazed, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnifying God."² Here there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit—a distinct baptism of the Spirit, not only before baptism, but before any profession of faith in Jesus Christ. We cannot suppose that it was prior to

¹ Acts viii. 15, 17.

² Acts x. 44-46.

faith itself, but must conclude that while Peter was speaking, the Spirit worked faith in the hearts of those who heard. But the first intimation given to the other disciples that these Gentiles were now believers in Christ, and accepted by Him, was not their confession of faith and application for baptism, but their receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit. Thus the Sovereign Spirit acted on this occasion. It was the exception which proves the rule. And the reason of the exception in this case is obvious. Without it the door would not have been opened to the Gentiles to enter the Church of Christ. Had Cornelius and his household professed faith in Christ and asked baptism, Peter would have told them that they must first become disciples of Moses by circumcision ; or, if he had himself been willing to grant it, he evidently could not have carried his brethren with him. But when the supreme gift of the Church had been bestowed on these Gentile converts, it would have been presumption to deny them the rite of entrance into it. Peter and those who were with him had not even the opportunity of doubting and

hesitating. Peter's words were conclusive: "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"¹ And when he was challenged in the Church of Jerusalem for acting as he did, he pleaded the fact that they had been baptized with the Holy Ghost,² and this was held to be conclusive. We see even from this exceptional case that the gift or baptism of the Spirit was looked on as something superadded to faith, and the new life of which it is the fruit.

Having looked at these instances illustrating the *fact* of the baptism of the Spirit, let us now seek to learn something of its nature and characteristics. And we may do this under the two words, both applied to the Spirit in Jesus after His baptism, *power*³ and *fulness*.⁴

Jesus, we have seen, received a power for His Messianic work at His baptism; the disciples received power also at Pentecost.⁵ It is instructive to notice the difference of form which the Spirit assumed at the baptism

¹ Acts x. 47.

² Acts xi. 15, 16.

³ Luke iv. 14.

⁴ Luke iv. 1.

⁵ Acts i. 8.

of Jesus, and at the baptism of the apostles at Pentecost. In coming on Jesus He took the form of a dove;¹ in coming on the disciples He took the form of tongues of fire.² The dove, we saw, was the best type that could be chosen of the brooding power of the bird in bringing forth her young. It was consequently the symbol of the power in Christ that would enable Him to bring life out of the chaos of sin and death into which creation had fallen. The tongue was symbolical of the power of utterance, and in the case of the apostles signified the power that was to be given them in witnessing for Christ.³ That is all to which the disciple is called, he can only expect power to declare the truth. Thereby he may be instrumental in bringing conviction to men, but he has not the life-giving power which belongs to Christ alone, and to the Spirit as sent by Him into each individual soul.

When the Holy Spirit came down on the disciples at Pentecost, they received power to bear witness to Jesus Christ, which was the first work they had to do. The speaking

¹ Matt. iii. 16, etc.

² Acts ii. 3.

³ Acts i. 8.

with tongues was such a witness, the working of miracles was such another.¹ They had a power and liberty of utterance and of confirming it by signs such as they never had before. There was more than even this: there was the evident working of the Holy Spirit in the minds of those who heard them,² so that the number of those who believed and were baptized in one day was greater than that of all who had become disciples of Christ during His whole ministry. When there is a real baptism of the Spirit for preaching the word, we may expect that a corresponding baptism will be given to the hearers to enable them to receive it and profit by it. The power that enabled the apostles to speak, enabled the hearers to believe, and begat the new life in them.

As the history of the Church proceeds, we find the power of the Spirit developed in other gifts besides that of speaking. At what we may call the second baptism of the Church after the first trial of the apostles, we see different forms of power given to the apostles and to the multitude whom they had gathered: "And

¹ Acts ii. 33; iii. 16.

² Acts ii. 37, 38.

when they had prayed, the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together ; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost ; and they spake the word with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and soul ; and not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own ; but they had all things common.”¹ Here the power of speaking the word is given as one fruit of the Spirit, though in the nature of things it would belong only to a few ; the power of communion was given to all, and the power to be liberal to those who had wherewith to be liberal. These differences of power are still more clearly brought out in the following verses : “ And with great power gave the apostles their witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.”² That was the special work that had been committed to them, and they received renewed power for it. But the whole Church received a benefit : “ Great grace was upon them all. For neither was there any among them that lacked ; for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold and laid them at the

¹ Acts iv. 31, 32.

² Acts iv. 33.

apostles' feet."¹ Here we see the extraordinary power of the Church in liberality, put along with the extraordinary power of the apostles in witnessing to Christ's resurrection, as a result of the gift of the Spirit. The two graces are not necessarily distinct; they will be found together where there is occasion for their exercise, as was the case with Barnabas but the baptism of the Spirit is seen in the one case as in the other. While the natural generosity of some natures will lead them to be generous, and the new life springing from the new birth will lead to a consecration of one's self and one's possessions to the service of Christ, we must also recognise that to call out the liberality of the Church for the full requirements of Christ's kingdom, a baptism of the Spirit is needed for the whole Church as much as for evangelists and teachers in preaching the word.

This liberality called for a new office in the Church, that of distributing the gifts thus contributed, to relieve the apostles and enable them to continue in their proper sphere of prayer and the ministry of the word, and for this it was recognised that men needed to be

¹ Acts iv. 34.

chosen full of the Spirit and of wisdom. They were chosen and set apart for the office by the laying on of the apostles' hands.

Subsequent indications of the baptism of the Spirit with its various results we get in the Epistles. The first that meets us is in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; to another faith in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will."¹ In this passage we have a picture of the Spirit manifesting itself in various gifts, some of them evidently only temporary, some the nature of which we have difficulty now in understanding, but some such as might be looked for even to the present day in the Church. They all have a bearing more or less directly on witnessing

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 8-11.

to the truth and confirming it with signs ; yet we cannot but feel in reading Paul's words that he is dealing with an abnormal manifestation of the Spirit's power, the result of His first impact on an assembly of freshly awakened men, in whom the new birth has not yet begotten a matured spiritual life, but in whom He has to struggle with the weaknesses and sins of the flesh. Such manifestations have been repeated again and again in the history of the Church, and the apostle shows us the spirit in which they should be dealt with : that of charity and forbearance.

In the Epistle to the Romans we have a more satisfactory and normal state of affairs referred to,¹ in which gifts are mainly noticed that are permanent in the Church, including not only teaching and exhorting, but such gifts as giving, ruling, and works of mercy, which belong to the general upbuilding of the Church of Christ.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians we see the Church settling down, as it were, to what was to be its permanent state : " And He gave some ✓
to be apostles, and some prophets : and some

¹ Rom. xii. 6-8. ✓

evangelists ; and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints.”¹ Here we have the offices of the Church which were temporary—apostles and prophets, conjoined with those that were to be permanent—evangelists and pastors and teachers. And for such, special gifts of the Spirit in its one great unity were given.²

Looking at the general question of the power given in the baptism of the Spirit, we see that it is a special power for service or work in the kingdom of God. To Jesus Christ Himself it brought the power for the whole of His Messianic work. To the apostles it brought, with whatever special temporary manifestations it may have been at first accompanied, the power of witnessing to Jesus Christ, and declaring the whole of His gospel. As the Church grew and developed, the same power was given for every special service or office to which its members might be called.

With such power given to it, it might seem

¹ Eph. iv. 11, 12.

² The gifts are in the context spoken of as being bestowed by Jesus Christ, for it is He who gives the Spirit.

that the Church would soon have been completely triumphant ; that if it did not win the world at once to Christ, at all events there would be no failure in its witnessing to Him by life and word in a way that could never leave room for mistake, and that could never fail of power. But this it failed to do, for it did not retain the *fulness* of the Spirit.

This is the second point we have to consider in connection with the Baptism of the Spirit. After the Spirit came on Jesus, we read that He was full of the Spirit. We read of this only once,¹ and that at the beginning of His ministry. Once full of the Spirit, He was always so ; He retained the fulness on to the close. It came to be part of His life, always present, enabling Him to act constantly and without variation in the power of the Spirit.

In the case of others this fulness of the Spirit appears only on special occasions, and hence we see in them a strange mixture of power and weakness. Before the coming of Christ, we see in Elijah the fulness of spiritual power, with which he brought Israel to a decision for God on Carmel, pass away, and leave him powerless

¹ Luke iv. 1.

before the threat of an idolatrous queen.¹ Of John the Baptist we are told that he was filled with the Spirit from his youth.² In its power he preached repentance, reproved the king, recognised and welcomed Jesus as the Christ. But when the trial of imprisonment came, the power seems to have failed; and the message he sent through his disciples to Christ, "Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?"³ indicates a want of the faith and patience which we might expect of one full of the Spirit.

But these instances were before the great baptism of the Spirit foretold by John and Christ Himself, and of which the first outpouring came on Pentecost. We read that on it the disciples assembled in the upper room were all "filled with the Holy Spirit." This was a baptism of the Church as a whole, affecting every member of it. We find the same thing repeated subsequently after the apostles had returned from their trial before the Sanhedrim—when we read again that in answer to prayer "the place was shaken wherein they were gathered together; and they were all filled with

¹ 1 Kings xviii., xix.

² Luke i. 15.

³ Matt. xi. 3.

the Holy Ghost.”¹ The Church had no doubt by this time increased in numbers, and there were many who had not experienced the power of the first baptism. But even this shows how utterly impossible it is for a living, and therefore growing Church to rest content with having been once baptized of the Spirit—that however much it and its members may have been filled with the Spirit at one time, that fulness cannot continue unless the gift of the Spirit be maintained or renewed. And in the subsequent history of the Church in Jerusalem we see a falling away—a tendency to narrowness and sectarianism very different from what we might expect in a Church blessed with the Spirit.

Let us now turn to individual cases. We have only two instances of persons about whom it is said that they were filled with the Holy Ghost, but these two are sufficient to illustrate the whole. Peter, like the rest of the apostles, was filled with the Holy Ghost on Pentecost, and uttered the discourse which won three thousand to the

¹ Acts iv. 31.

faith. Subsequently, when he was called to answer before the rulers, elders, and scribes, we are told expressly that he was "filled with the Holy Ghost,"¹ as though the fulness was given him for the special work he had then to do. And we can recognise the same power as present in his dealing with Ananias and Sapphira, and in his receiving the household of Cornelius. But we see the absence of that power in the weakness and inconsistency of his conduct at Antioch, which brought on him the reproofs of Paul.²

The second instance of the fulness of the Spirit is Paul. We are told that when called on to deal with Elymas at Paphos, he was filled with the Holy Ghost,³ and wrought on the impostor his first miracle, one of judgment. This was the first definite act of his apostleship, and the fulness of the Spirit here recorded may be taken to apply to all his subsequent career. But at the same time we see also weaknesses and imperfections, as in his quarrel with Barnabas, which show that even in him the fulness was not constant, and that Jesus Christ was the only one on whom the Spirit came in

¹ Acts iv. 8.

² Gal. ii. 11, 14.

³ Acts. xiii. 9.

perfect fulness, and with whom He abode to the very end.

The important question for us to look at in connection with this is why the fulness of power was constant in Christ and not in any of His disciples. And the answer is plain: in Him the spiritual life was perfect. He was a vessel without a flaw, who retained the Spirit when it came upon Him; He was also one of infinite capacity. It was true of Him that God gave Him not the Spirit by measure;¹ He had the fulness of the Spirit in all its varied powers abiding with Him constantly. The best of His disciples had only a limited capacity and only to the limit of that capacity could they be filled. Hence each disciple had some special gift of the Spirit, while in others he was deficient, and even that gift he did not always fully retain. It might depart from him altogether, just owing to failure in his spiritual life and service.

To change the mode of expression, remembering that it is with a Personal Spirit we have to do, the will of Jesus Christ was in perfect harmony with that of the Spirit, as it was also

¹John iii. 34.

with that of the Father, and when once the Spirit came to abide with Him, He abode with Him constantly. There was no discord, no sluggishness, no failure of response, to lead the Holy Spirit to withdraw Himself. But in the case of the very best of Christ's disciples it is different. There is a constant tendency of the natural will to resist the Spirit, a sluggishness in responding to His call, a readiness to substitute other principles for those which the Spirit teaches, and so to grieve the Spirit and lead Him to withdraw Himself. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee"¹ is a warning to which every minister of the New Covenant must give heed, whatever his ministry may be. He must "walk by the Spirit,"² let the Spirit guide him in all his daily life, if he would have His help in all the Christian service to which he is called.

But while we see that with the imperfections of our nature the presence and power of the Spirit are seldom if ever retained in their fulness, there is always hope that they may be restored. The second outpouring of the Spirit, recorded in Acts iv., shows what the Church may expect to have repeated again and again, when

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

² Gal. v. 16.

she seeks to rise to the full height of her calling in the service of her Lord.

We have thus considered the main truths regarding the Baptism of the Spirit to be learned from the record and teaching of the Bible. We see that both in Jesus Christ and in His disciples it is something different from the birth of the Spirit. In the birth, the Holy Spirit communicates His nature to those whom He begets, conferring a spotless nature in the case of Jesus, conferring a new nature in the case of sinful men and transforming their character. In the baptism, the Holy Spirit comes as a guest, a helper, a Lord, to help and to rule those with whom He abides. The birth begets in us a life which needs, like all life, to be nourished and developed with its appropriate food and exercise—the food of the word, the exercise of service and of prayer; and while these are maintained we may hope that this new life will ever become stronger. The baptism brings us a friend and helper, who nourishes the life He has begotten, who calls to service and gives us strength for it; but it is also in His sovereign power to with-

draw and leave our life to struggle on in its own strength.

These are the two modes of the Spirit's work in man, and it is obvious that they are but two sides of the same work. There needs to be an initial baptism of the Spirit to beget the new life in the new birth, and that new life is needful to respond to the guidance of the Spirit who comes to be with us as a friend. In a complete Christian life both of these will be manifest. Sometimes He may give His presence as a guide and helper in a quiet life of ordinary routine and unobtrusive service, utterly different from the ordinary idea of a baptism of the Spirit, but not a less true baptism on that account. Sometimes He may rouse a person to special service, and may endue him with power for service in a manner that seems to him and to others a fresh baptism of the Spirit. Sometimes, when a fresh work, a fresh advance, is needed by the Church, He may rouse multitudes simultaneously; then the Church as a whole receives a baptism, and there is a revival of religion.

Such a baptism, such a revival, it is right that we should seek for ourselves, for the con-

gregation to which we belong, for the whole Church of Christ. When that has been received, we may expect that His word will have free course and be glorified, that sinners will be awakened, souls born anew, witness borne to Christ by His people, and His reign extended throughout all the earth.

VIII

Conditions of receiving the Holy Spirit

Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?—ACTS xix. 2.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.—GAL. iii. 13, 14.

*If you love Me, ye will keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth.
—JOHN xiv. 15-17.*

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him.—LUKE xi. 13.

VIII

Conditions of receiving the Holy Spirit

WHEN Paul came to Ephesus he found a dozen disciples. He was, no doubt, glad to find them. He hoped that they would be a great help to him. But he found a great want of power in them which he could explain only in one way—that they had not received the Holy Spirit. So he asked them the question, “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” That is a question which might be put to many believers nowadays. You believe, but have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed? If not, why not? These disciples had fulfilled some conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit, they had not fulfilled others. So it may be that many believers are without the baptism of the Spirit because they have not fulfilled all the conditions necessary for receiving it. Let us consider what these are.

Let us cast a glance again at some of the ground we have gone over. The baptism of the Spirit is not the birth of the Spirit ; it is a power given not merely for life, but for service. The clearest distinction between the two is seen in the life of our Lord. Born of the Holy Spirit, Son of God as well as Son of Man, He dwelt thirty years in Nazareth as the son of Joseph, leading a spotless life, but not doing His Messianic work. After being baptized by John in the Jordan, He received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, He entered at once on His career as Messiah, and accomplished the work of the world's salvation. Now, there are many followers of Jesus Christ who only follow Him in His Nazareth life, but do not seek to follow Him in His Messianic life—persons who are undoubtedly born of the Holy Spirit, and with His help are seeking to live their daily life in the world, but who have not been baptized with the Spirit, and who therefore do no service in the kingdom of the Christ. Yet this is the true end of the birth of the Spirit. It is an end which, I believe, we all desire ; and that we may attain it we must fulfil the requisite conditions.

Here I do not forget what I have already pointed out — the sovereignty of the Spirit. Alike in giving life and in giving power He is like the wind which bloweth as it listeth. In the exercise of His sovereignty He may give power of service even to men who are not converted. Or rather, there are men to whom He comes who resist His saving power and welcome His working power. It is one of those mysteries of divine sovereignty and human freedom which we cannot understand. But as there was Balaam in Old Testament times, so there are to be found now those who preach the gospel to others and yet themselves are cast-aways. No one would desire to receive the baptism of the Spirit on such conditions as these.

So too in the exercise of the same sovereignty He may come to believers who are not expecting Him nor desiring Him—at all events, not desiring the special service to which He calls them. Such have been some of the most powerful leaders in the Church from the earliest days till now. But it is surely not the part of true servants merely to wait without seeking to be prepared and fitted for any service to which they may be called.

In this we have a clear model before us—one whom we must seek to follow—Jesus Christ. If He received the Spirit without measure, if it abode on Him in all fulness and power, if He received the perfect baptism, it was because He had as Son of Man lived perfectly the divine life, the life of the Spirit. Let us seek to follow Him in that life, and we may hope to receive the Spirit in our measure.

8 *Faith* is the first condition I would name for receiving a baptism of the Spirit. It might be more exact to say that the first condition is the new birth. But practically it will be more profitable to confine ourselves to the most distinguishing fruit of the new birth, in which we may consciously exercise ourselves. We have nothing in us by nature to supply that condition of receiving the Holy Spirit which Jesus had in perfection from His very birth. But by faith we attain the position of sons of God, entitled to the gift of the Spirit. Faith is one of the fruits of the new birth, it is what we have to recognise and cherish. Therefore I say that faith in Jesus Christ is a

*contradicts himself. See last page.
e.g. Balaam - he mentions.*

necessary condition of receiving the baptism of the Spirit. Paul in his Epistle to the Galatians says: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us, . . . that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."¹ This shows the grounds on which the gift of the Spirit rests. Christ has redeemed us: that is His work. We must have faith: that is our work. Christ Himself became a curse for us, and thus delivered us from the curse which prevented us receiving the Spirit. When we believe in His redemption, we may hope to receive His Spirit.

Let us see how this is applied in a practical example. Peter in addressing the multitude on the day of Pentecost said: "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."² Here repentance and confession through baptism—the immediate fruits of faith—are indicated as the condition of receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost.

If we wish to receive the Holy Spirit, let us begin low. Let us put ourselves in the position

¹ Gal. iii. 13, 14.

² Acts ii. 38.

of those Jews to whom Peter first offered the Holy Spirit. Let us seek to realise that we are as guilty as they in putting to death the Lord of glory, and that it is only in the mercy of God as sealed in the gift of Christ that we have hope of forgiveness. Let us realise the assurance that all our sins are borne by Him, that there is now no condemnation to us because we are in Him; that, to complete His work in us, there is no gift which He who gave Him will not freely give along with Him. When we wish to attain heights of spiritual power and service, we must ever go back to these foundations of our faith, rest on them, and from them seek to rise to every blessing which God has promised. The ground on which we may hope to receive the Holy Spirit, as every other blessing, is faith.

Obedience is the second condition of receiving the gift of the Spirit. We must do God's will in our daily life. Our Lord made this condition with His disciples when He gave the promise of the Spirit: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you the Paraclete, even the

Spirit of Truth.”¹ Those who are disobedient, disloyal, or careless cannot expect that God will give them His unspeakable gift. This is a consequence of the previous condition. If there is true faith, there will be true obedience also—the steadfast endeavour to carry out in this life the will of Him in whom we believe.

Jesus Himself fulfilled this condition ere He received the baptism of the Spirit. He went to Nazareth and was subject to His parents. What a trial in one respect this must have been to Him we may judge from the scene in the temple when He was twelve years of age. He even then showed a knowledge of the truth which would have fitted Him for taking a place with the rabbis. His words, “Wist ye not that I must be in My Father’s house?”² showed a consciousness of divine Sonship which might have made Him desire not to be bound by the trammels of earthly relationship. But He returned to Nazareth with His parents and was subject to them,³ and for eighteen years so continued. We may imagine a little of the self-restraint which this implied. Had He lived nowadays, He would have been urged to speak

¹ John xiv. 15, 16.

² Luke ii. 49.

³ Luke ii. 51.

in public, to use for the benefit of others those gifts which He evidently possessed. But He continued quietly discharging all those duties to which He was called by His station in life, waiting for the time when His Father should call Him to His public work. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience."

And His obedience was seen in the last act of His private life, by which He entered on His public ministry. He went to the Jordan to be baptized of John. What need was there for Him to do this? John, who knew Him, said, "I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?" What was Jesus' reply? "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."¹ He was born under the law, and the conditions of His life, and of the position in which He was, required Him to conform to what was meant only for sinful men. John's baptism taught the children of Abraham that they could not enter the kingdom of heaven by reason of their birth, but only by righteousness. It was the same law for Jesus as for others: He was in the kingdom by a righteousness which He had

¹ Matt. iii. 14, 15.

by nature ; they by a righteousness which they could attain only through repentance. Thus was Jesus obedient in the very smallest detail : He fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law ; and when He had thus obeyed in everything, the Holy Spirit came upon Him—a lesson to us that if we wish to receive the Holy Spirit we must be obedient too.

It does not require much reflection to see that obedience to the great moral law of God is a condition of receiving the power of the Spirit ; but it is well to notice also that there are special commands and ordinances, obedience to which is required. To the disciples Jesus gave the command, “Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem till ye be endued with power from on high.”¹ This was a severe test of obedience for the disciples. Jerusalem was for them a strange city—a city full of foes, where the work appointed them by their Lord seemed least likely of accomplishment. But they obeyed the command. They remained in spite of all discouragements till they received the promised reward—power from on high.

To us there are not given any such special

¹ Luke xxiv. 49.

commands, but there are general commands by which Christ tests the obedience of His followers. When Peter spake to the multitude on Pentecost he said, "Repent, and be baptized, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."¹ We can understand why they were bidden repent: that was an act of life. But why were they also bidden to be baptized? The only reason we can see is that it was the token of obedience and of confession, and was required as a condition of receiving the Holy Spirit.

In the case of the disciples at Ephesus who believed there was just the want of the fulfilment of this one condition. They believed, they had been baptized into the baptism of John, but they had not been baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. As soon as they had fulfilled this condition, they received the Holy Spirit.

This spirit of obedience is still required as a condition of receiving the Holy Spirit—not only obedience to the moral law, but obedience to all the requirements of discipleship. Christ in instituting the Supper gave the command, "This do in remembrance of Me."² Then

¹ Acts ii. 38.

² 1 Cor. xi. 24.

there is the general command not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together ;¹ and there are all the means of grace which we are expected to use. No one who neglects the use of those means, who forsakes the assemblies of Christ's people, who neglects to commemorate His death in the manner He has appointed, can expect to receive a baptism of the Spirit. No doubt at times individuals have appeared with great spiritual power who have been the means of producing a revival of religion, and who have separated themselves from the ordinary means of grace as they were then available. But that has been because these had become degraded by a spirit of utter formalism, and had lost all power of quickening life. Earnest souls have then separated from the Churches, and begun a work of direct evangelisation. But this has been the result of obedience to a higher law than ecclesiastical custom ; and when it has been a true work of the Spirit, there has either been the gathering of a fresh community for worship and for observance of the sacraments, or a return to a Church quickened and spiritualised by the faithful preaching of the

¹ Heb. x. 25.

word. As a general rule for all Christians, the employment of the regular means of grace is essential as a condition of receiving the power of the Spirit, and no Church can expect it where there is a general neglect of these means.

But there are many who seek to observe Christ's ordinances and to obey His laws who have not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. That may be because one other condition remains to be fulfilled.

Prayer is a condition of receiving a baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: "If ye who are evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."¹ It is possible that the Holy Spirit may be given to persons who have not prayed for Him. Nay, more, individual instances are to be found both in Sacred Writ and in the history of the Church in which the Spirit has taken possession of a man in spite of himself, and begotten in him the power and the practice of prayer. But I do not think any instance

¹ Luke xi. 13.

could be found of the Holy Spirit coming on the Church as a whole except in answer to prayer.

Jesus Himself was no exception to this rule. Luke's account of the coming of the Spirit on Him is: "Jesus also having been baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily form as a dove upon Him."¹ Jesus prayed, and the Holy Spirit was given Him. So it was with the apostles. Between the time of Christ's ascension and Pentecost we are told that they continued steadfast in prayer² till the Spirit came on them as a rushing mighty wind. On a subsequent occasion we are told that when they had offered up prayer the place was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.³ I need not dwell long on this, for we know that prayer is the appointed means for receiving all the gifts which God bestows; and His supreme gift, the Holy Spirit, is no exception to this rule. Let us rather turn to some of the characteristics of the prayer needed for securing this gift of the Spirit.

First, it must be *united* prayer. The Spirit

¹ Luke iii. 21, 22.

² Acts i. 14.

³ Acts iv. 41.

is a Spirit of brotherly love—of love to all mankind. It is the Spirit in its multitudinous action that we seek to have, not the Spirit in its individual action. This latter we see in the birth of the Spirit and the life of the Spirit, and we must seek to cherish it mainly by secret prayer and devotion. That is the basis from which we must work, seeking further strength through the service of the sanctuary and the preaching of the word. But we have not to live for ourselves alone; we have to live for others, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is given as the power to enable us to benefit others. It is therefore to be sought not only individually, but unitedly. If we wish to have real power, we must seek the prayers of others along with our own.

It does not need to be a large union: it may be only two. "If any of you shall agree as touching anything that ye shall ask, it shall be done for you of My Father which is in heaven."¹ But these two, if they ask the Holy Spirit, must ask it not for themselves alone, but for all God's people, and they must

¹ Matt. xviii. 19.

be ready to welcome to their union for prayer all who sincerely seek the same end.

It was in answer to the united prayer of all the disciples in Jerusalem that the Holy Spirit came down on Pentecost. They all continued *with one accord* in prayer and supplication.¹ When the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all *with one accord* in one place, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.² In the account of the second great baptism of the Church, we read: "They lifted up their heart to God *with one accord*; and when they had prayed the place was shaken where they were assembled together, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."³ The whole history of the Church is full of instances of the gift of the Holy Spirit coming in answer to the united prayers of Christ's people.

It must further be *importunate* prayer. The whole passage⁴ leading up to the promise—"If ye who are evil know how to give

¹ Acts i. 14.

² Acts ii. 1, 2.

³ Acts iv. 24.

⁴ Luke xi. 5-13.

good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him," —is designed to show not only the need of prayer, but the need of importunate prayer. There is not only the going to a friend at midnight to ask, but the continued asking till the desired boon is received. Not only are we told to ask, but to seek and to knock. God does not give His supreme gift in answer to careless prayer. There must be the anxious, continued waiting on God, which shows the supreme value we set on the gift we seek.

Previous to the great baptism of Pentecost there was not only united prayer, there was prayer continued day after day till the blessing came. As far as we can judge, there must have been ten days spent constantly in prayer. Each day we may believe that the praying Church was looking for the promised blessing, and in the state of tension in which they then were the delay of even a day must have been a trial for them. But they continued steadfast, and at last the blessing came suddenly, manifestly, overpoweringly. So it has always

been in the history of the Church. The blessing has come in different ways. Sometimes it has come suddenly and startlingly, as at first ; sometimes it has come gradually and gently ; but in nearly every case where it has been manifest, there has been traced the united prayer of some of God's people beforehand, continued sometimes through months and years, till at last it has been answered in a plentiful outpouring of the Spirit.

Faith, obedience, prayer — these are the conditions of receiving a baptism of the Spirit. While we remember that He is a sovereign Spirit, we must remember also that we have the promises of God to go on, and that if we obey His will we shall receive what He has promised. The fault of the Church has been that of neglecting to seek the Spirit in the appointed way, much more than that of not waiting on His sovereign pleasure.

The desire of the Church for a revival of religion is sometimes shown by the eagerness with which it seeks to secure the services of any well-known powerful evangelist. And when anyone has been honoured by the Spirit as a

means of awakening, converting, and quickening souls, it is only recognising the Spirit's work itself to seek his aid. But there may come to be too much dependence on such human instrumentality, forgetting that the Holy Spirit is independent of any one agent, and can bless any and all of the means He has appointed.

The revival of 1859-60 was not connected with the name of any one man specially; it was noted rather for the number of inspired workers it called out than for anyone in particular. It was manifestly a revival wrought by the Holy Spirit, and it was the most widespread and far-reaching in its results of any that has taken place this century. Others have followed since which have been more connected with the names of special evangelists. These have done much good, but they have been more limited in their extent.

But the Church does not yet seem as a whole to have learned the lesson which the labours of these evangelists should teach it—that there are diversities of gifts, and that for these diversities of gifts she must make provision in her regular organisation if her

work is to be accomplished. "Evangelists and pastors and teachers," are the permanent orders of ministry in the Church according to the fitness of natural qualification and endowment of the Spirit.¹ For pastors and teachers the Church has made ample provision; for evangelists she has made next to none. Some sections of the Church are recognising the need of this order, and are setting apart specially endowed men for specially aggressive work. Until this system is fully acted on by all the Churches, until the ministry of the evangelist is recognised as being equally honourable and important with that of the pastor and teacher, the Church will remain weak for aggressive action. The work of evangelising the careless and godless will remain very much in the hands of individuals who have special gifts in this way, or of societies which seek to utilise these gifts, but in which the gift and the provision for teaching and upbuilding are wanting. Some of these societies are working cordially and earnestly along with the organised Churches, and in the present state of affairs this is perhaps the best working arrangement that can be made;

¹ See p. 164.

though the true ideal of the Church is that of one equally well equipped for conquest among the unconverted as well as for edifying the converted—for extending as well as for upbuilding the kingdom of God.

There are means available by which the ministry of the word may be carried on, and on which the power of the Spirit may come. He may bless these means and the persons who use them, or He may call out persons whom He sees fitted for the work, but whose fitness is little suspected by others; and He may suggest methods not yet thought of, the power and efficiency of which may astonish the Church. Let Christ's people honour the Divine Spirit by trusting Him to accomplish His own work; let them believe the promises of their Lord; let them recall the miracles of the past, and abound in believing, united, unwearying prayer; and the Spirit will come to lead them to greater conquests than any that have yet been achieved.

IX

The Eternal Sin

Verily, I say unto you, All their sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and their blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: but whosoever shall blaspheme against the Holy Spirit hath never forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin.—MARK iii. 28, 29.

Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.—ACTS vii. 51.

Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.—EPH. iv. 30.

IX

The Eternal Sin

IN studying the work of the Holy Spirit on the world, we saw that it might have a twofold result : if yielded to, it resulted in the new birth and equipment for service ; if resisted, it resulted in hardening, and in the eternal sin. The former alternative we have considered in the three preceding chapters, we now turn to the consideration of the latter.

The subject is one of the most solemn and awful revealed in the whole Bible. It has been said that the Old Testament reveals God's judgment against sin, and the New Testament God's forgiveness of sin. This is not the whole truth. God's forgiveness of sin is declared in the Old Testament as well as in the New, though not so fully nor with its seal in Jesus Christ. God's judgment against sin is declared in the New Testament as well as in the Old, and if there is not so

much of it, yet there is nothing in the Old Testament so terrible as the declaration that a man may be guilty of an eternal sin—a sin that hath never forgiveness either in this world or the world to come. And it is well to notice that it is in the teaching of our Lord, who came with the message of mercy from heaven, that this awful truth is most emphatically declared.

Not only is the subject one of great solemnity, it is one of great difficulty. No one has more exercised the acutest intellects, or baffled the most devout study. We cannot hope to arrive at a certain full understanding of what the eternal sin—blaspheming the Spirit—is. None the less are we bound to seek to know as much as we can, and we may learn enough to warn us against the danger of incurring the guilt.

We may be helped to understand this sin and its consequences by looking at the exemplification of it which we have in the case of the Jews. What was the great sin of which they as a nation were guilty? It was summed up by Stephen, in his defence before the council, “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost ;

as your fathers did, so do ye."¹ There were none who professed higher reverence for the name of God, or who more zealously sought to obey His law, as they understood it, than the Jews. But they resisted the Holy Spirit. When Stephen spoke, their resistance had come to a climax. They became the example of a nation which had sinned against the Spirit, and from its example we may learn something of what the sin and its consequences are.

To enable us to understand these, let us turn to the occasion on which our Lord first warned the Pharisees of their danger.² What were the circumstances?

He had healed one possessed with a devil, dumb and blind—so that the devil was cast out, the dumb spake, the blind saw. The people were amazed, and drew the natural inference that this was their expected Messiah. Not so the Pharisees. They acknowledged the power, but said it was an evil power: "This man doth not cast out devils but by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." This roused our Lord. Attacks on Himself as a Nazarene and as unlearned He could

¹ Acts vii. 51.

² Matt. xii. 22-37.

endure and forgive, but when His foes declared that the power by which He worked was Satan, and not God, then the honour of His Father was attacked; the Holy Spirit which His Father had given Him was blasphemed. Then He spoke out, and declared that for such a sin there could be no forgiveness.

There could be forgiveness for speaking a word against the Son of Man. If that could be forgiven, all manner of sins and blasphemies could be forgiven; for it was the greatest of all, it led to His crucifixion. And this sin could be forgiven just because Jesus was the Son of Man. There was nothing in Him to bespeak His divinity to ordinary men. He taught a religion of matchless purity, but it was opposed to the religion to which they had been accustomed. The people might be excused if they still followed their religious guides and spoke against the Son of Man. They did it in ignorance. So Jesus prayed for His murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In this spirit, too, Huss, the Bohemian martyr—when he was bound to the stake, and a woman, full of zeal for the Roman Church, threw another faggot

on to the pile, that she might have her share in the punishment of the arch-enemy of the Christian Church—exclaimed, “Holy simplicity!”¹ He saw that the sin was against a son of man—a sin of ignorance.

But the Pharisees had gone a step beyond this. They had spoken not against Jesus, but against the power that was in Him. They saw that something more than the mere Son of Man was concerned in the works He did. They had the alternative of ascribing it to God or to Satan. They chose the latter alternative: “By Beelzebub, the prince of the devils, He casteth out devils.”² This was a conclusion opposed, as Jesus shows, to all human reason, utterly wanting in common sense. It was therefore prompted by an evil will. It was not so much that the one word they spoke was bad, as that it indicated a state of mind and heart which resisted the truth, not because it considered it error, but because it was not conformed to their evil desires.

Even for these blasphemers, however, there was still hope. They were blaspheming the Holy Spirit, but it was the Holy Spirit in the

¹ *Sancta simplicitas.*

² Luke xi. 15.

Son of Man, and that might still be considered a sin against the Son of Man. There was still ignorance enough in them to make it possible that with further enlightenment they might repent of the evil, that with a direct pleading of the Spirit they might turn to their Messiah.

But when Stephen spoke, the critical time had come. The worst possible sin against the Son of Man had been committed in His being put to death as a malefactor. That had been forgiven. Jesus had shown His forgiveness by giving His disciples the command to begin the preaching of the gospel at Jerusalem. God the Father had shown His forgiveness by giving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, to bless the preaching. That Spirit was working in the nation, pleading with it to turn to Jesus as the Christ. The rulers of the nation—those who determined its action—had felt themselves called on to deal with this. They had been confounded by the rising of Jesus from the dead—they had been confounded by the power of the Spirit working among the people to glorify His name. Once and again they had sought to oppose it, but had been baffled by the manifest evidence that it was no longer with the Son of Man they had

to do, and they had to beware lest—as one of their own number put it—they might haply be found even to be fighting against God. Now, when Stephen spoke, the critical time had come. Stephen saw that he was condemned, and that in condemning him they had determined themselves against the Holy Spirit. Therefore he summed up the crime of the nation in the words, “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost.” This had led to other sins—persecuting the prophets in the time of their fathers, betraying and murdering the Just One in their own day. But the root of all was resisting the Holy Ghost. And in slaying Stephen himself, and in the persecution that followed, they took their final stand. As a nation they blasphemed the Holy Ghost, and so committed a sin which could not be forgiven. It was not merely that judgment soon came on them in the terrible destruction of Jerusalem. It was that they put themselves in a position in which, in so far as human eye can discern, it became impossible for them as a nation to accept Christ. The destruction of Jerusalem, and the expulsion from Canaan, deprived them of a country, without which, in general, no nation can be a

nation. Still they continue a nation without a country, but with a vitality such as no other nation has. But their only bond of nationality now is the observance of that law, whose fulfilment in Jesus of Nazareth they refuse to accept. If they do accept it, they go outside the bounds of Jewish nationality. Many Jews have indeed believed in Jesus as the Messiah. I daresay if their descendants were reckoned, it would be found that there are as many Jews in the Christian Church as in the Jewish synagogue. But they no longer belong to the Jewish people; they are absorbed in the Gentile nations among whom they live. Many Jews are now being brought to own Jesus as their promised Messiah, and to seek salvation through faith in Him. But they are cut off from the nation, and their children lose all sense of connection with it. Thus the nation as a nation remains where it was, a witness to the truth of God's word, a terrible national example of what the sin against God's Spirit means.¹

¹ This position of the Jews must be looked at in connection with all the predictions of God's word as to their restoration. It is difficult to see how the Jews, situated as they now are, can accept Christ and yet continue a distinct people. But God in His providence may open up the way for this.

But our Lord did not utter His warning for the Jews only; He uttered a universal truth, which applies to every individual now as well as to the Jews of old. Let us therefore examine more closely into the character of the sin of which He speaks.

One thing that strikes us in His words is, that the unpardonableness of this sin is due not to its heinousness but to its nature. Blasphemy may be forgiven the sons of men, but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. "Whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of Man it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in that which is to come."¹ These words show clearly that the reason why the sin cannot be forgiven is the Person against whom it is committed. This it is that puts it beyond the reach of forgiveness and makes it an eternal sin. This very fact shows that sins against the Holy Spirit are in a different category from other sins. Owing to the relation in which we stand to Him, sins against Him are more fatal to the sinner than other sins are.

¹ Matt. xii. 32.

To help us in understanding this, let us cast a glance back over some truths we have already learned. Let us remember the office of the Spirit. He is the Paraclete, who abides with us. He has been sent to apply to us the work of Christ—to enable us to know God the Father, whom Christ has revealed, to accept the forgiveness which Christ has sealed, to live the life of holiness and service which Christ has taught and exemplified. Only by His work can the work of Jesus Christ be effectual for our salvation. It thus at once appears how sin against the Spirit differs from sin against Christ. It not only hinders His own work in us, but it also renders vain the finished work of Christ. It mars the work of the Triune God for our redemption.

A parable may help to show the relation of the three Persons of the Trinity to man's salvation. A father wishes his younger son to be educated for a certain profession. The elder brother of that son, who has learned it himself, gives all the books and apparatus necessary for acquiring a knowledge of it. And they together engage a teacher to teach the younger son the knowledge required.

Now, it is evident—and this is the point of the illustration—that the final success of the plan of the father and elder brother depends on the success of the teacher whom they appoint. It is manifest, too, that it is only at this point that the younger son can yield to or resist the efforts of his father and brother. He may speak with the greatest respect and affection of both, but if he refuses to be taught by the teacher, he will remain ignorant of the science which they wish him to learn. On the other hand, he may speak most rebelliously of both, but if he submits to the teaching of the teacher they have appointed, he will end by learning the science they wish. Thus resistance to the father and elder brother may be atoned for by submission to the teacher they have sent; but resistance to the teacher cannot be atoned for by any nominal submission to the father. By its very nature it will prevent his son learning the science.¹

¹ Another comparison has been used to illustrate the work of the three persons of the Godhead in man's salvation. The Father is like a physician who by his wisdom has discovered a cure for a deadly disease; the Son is like another physician who by his skill prepares the medicine thus discovered; the Holy Spirit is like a third physician who goes about administering this medicine to the dying. Here again it is manifest that

So it is that God the Father has purposed that man shall learn the way of salvation, and has given His Son Jesus Christ for this end. Jesus has given us the word by which we may learn that way. They have sent the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us in that way. It is manifest that only as we yield to the teaching of the Spirit can the work of Christ be accomplished in us. To disregard or resist it, is to make vain the whole work of the Father and the Son for our salvation. No amount of professed reverence for God will atone for resisting the Spirit, for that is resisting the will and purpose of God, and making it impossible to receive forgiveness.

There is forgiveness with God. The whole work of Jesus Christ is to bear the consequences of sin and of God's forgiveness of it, to reconcile man with God, and to enable him to come to God as one forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."¹

it is only by the work of the third physician that the work of the other two can be made effectual. They may have finished their work and done it perfectly ; but if the sick refuse to take the remedy from the hands of the third, their resistance cannot but be fatal to them.

¹ 1 John i. 7.

There is no sin, however heinous, which this does not cover. But this work of Christ is outside the sinner: he needs to be united with it, and to have it brought, so to speak, within him. This can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit, and till His work is done, the man has no direct knowledge of the work of Christ. He may have a full intellectual knowledge of the gospel, of the facts of the Bible, of the duties of the Christian life. He may have listened to many human exhortations, but he has never experienced the prompting of the Spirit in his soul. Among those in this state there may be great moral diversities—a pure outward life, or gross moral transgression; but they are all alike in this, that there is as yet no sin against the Spirit, for He has not striven with them.

Then the Holy Spirit begins His work, striving to convict the soul of sin, and leading it to accept the forgiveness offered in Christ. He may be resisted, and when He is resisted, the consequences cannot but follow. There are many sins against the Holy Spirit which come short of the eternal sin, but they have all this character, that they are in a sense unpardon-

able—that is, there is no escape from certain of their consequences. The sinner may be pardoned, though the sin is punished.¹ In the illustration given above, the scholar may at first refuse to learn. His father may forgive him and still let him have the teacher, and he may make good progress with his studies. But he cannot escape the consequence of the loss of time and opportunity which his first rebellion has occasioned, and the consequent comparative deficiency in his mastery of the science, which must always remain.

So if anyone commits the sin of resisting the convicting work of the Spirit, he may be forgiven, but he cannot escape the consequences of his resistance. The Spirit may return and plead with greater, with triumphant power, and bring him to faith and to salvation. When Paul says, “Now is the very time of most favourable acceptance,”² he does not imply that, if it is neglected, another time may not come. But no other time can be so favourable as the present. The sinner who neglects it loses

¹ This distinction is very clearly drawn in Ps. xcix. 8 : “Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though Thou tookest vengeance of their doings.”

² 2 Cor. vi. 2. Such is the exact force of the text.

something he can never regain. He loses impressionability for good, he loses opportunities of service. He may yet attain to heights of holiness, that seem as though nothing were wanting. But that will still be wanting, which was lost through his first resistance. Not to all eternity will he be able to recover the opportunities of service and of progress he then lost. Not only so, but in resisting the Spirit he makes it easier to resist, more difficult to yield, if the Spirit should plead with him again. There is a hardening process begun, which is the beginning of the way that leads to the eternal sin.

And so we can understand how a man may come at last to be guilty of the eternal sin. There may be prolonged resistance. A time may come when the Spirit does not strive any longer. Sin is committed without conviction, and there is no need felt to look for the righteousness that is in Christ. Or there may be a yielding for some time and to a certain extent, till some crucial test arises—an act of decision is required which is resisted by the human will, and then the Spirit withdraws from the man. He may still occa-

sionally plead with him, but every successful resistance strengthens the power of resistance, every impression resisted weakens the power of receiving impression again. The very work of the Spirit tends to harden the man whom he seeks to save, till at last the Spirit ceases for ever to strive, and withdraws finally from him. There is no longer anything to lead him to Christ, and all the work of Christ for him is lost. He is then in the position that he is committing sins all of which are forgiven; however great and heinous they may be, there is forgiveness for them. There it is, offered for him to accept, but he has lost the power of accepting it, and lost it to all eternity.

When men fall this length they almost necessarily fall farther into active opposition to the truth. If it is brought before them in any such way that they feel the need of dealing with it, they oppose it with an envenomed determination that rejects all evidence for it, and is satisfied with the most futile arguments against it; that is ready to use intimidation, violence, the sword to crush it. Thus the Pharisees, unable to resist the evidence of Christ's miracles, attributed them to

the devil ; then they persecuted Him till they compassed His death ; then afterwards, unable to resist the power of His Spirit speaking in Stephen, they silenced it by stoning him. These were so many acts, but they were all outcomes of a state of mind and heart, that was ever becoming more determinedly active in evil and in hostility to the truth, till it became an eternal, immutable state of sin. It would not be difficult to find parallels to the action of the Jewish rulers in the subsequent history of the Church. And if nowadays such extreme manifestations are not to be seen, still in the malignant hostility of some to the truth or to its practical application in life, in their unreasoning exactingness in requiring evidence of the truth, in their dogged determination not to be swayed by it, in their readiness to accept anything, however worthless, that may seem to discredit it—we see indications that there are some who are incurring the eternal sin.

Up to this time we have looked only at the case of those who from the very beginning of the Spirit's working in them have maintained an

attitude of hostility to it, till they are incapable of any other. It is to such that the words of Jesus seem to me to refer. But is there no danger of this sin in those who have yielded to the Spirit and entered on the Christian life? It is impossible to read some other passages of Scripture inspired by the Spirit Himself, without feeling that even disciples may fall into sin against the Spirit, and they cannot do so without incurring some of the consequences. It was to disciples that the words were addressed, "Quench not the Spirit";¹ "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God."² The former of these seems from the context to refer rather to those gifts of the Spirit which follow the baptism of the Spirit, the despising or neglecting of which leads to loss of the fulness of the Spirit.³ The latter refers, as we see from the context very clearly, to sins of life and conversation, which grieve the Spirit. Both have the same result in weakening the power of the Spirit in him who yields to them. No clear call to service, to prayer, to speak or to hear the word, can be resisted—no temptation to unseemly conduct and conversation can be

¹ 1 Thess. v. 19.

² Eph. iv. 30.

³ See *ante*, pp. 169, 170.

yielded to, without incurring the penalty of loss of spiritual power and shortcoming in spiritual life. There may be a fresh baptism of the Spirit,¹ higher heights of life and power may be attained than ever before, but they cannot be so high as if these sins against the Spirit had never been committed, and the spiritual life had gone on with steady, uninterrupted growth.

There may thus be, even in the Christian life, the beginning of sin against the Spirit. It is different from the sin of which Christ speaks, in that it is not a resistance of the will, but rather a weakness of the will, a want of care, a declension of spiritual life. But, if persisted in, may it not at last reach a similar stage to the other? There are passages of Holy Writ which indicate that this is possible. Those "who have been enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," may fall away; and those who do so cannot be renewed again unto repentance.² This sin is more definitely put in another passage: "If

¹ See *ante*, pp. 166, 167.

² Heb. vi. 4-6.

we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”¹ Here we see sins of knowledge, sins of will, spoken of as being committed by those who were at one time disciples. It may be that the character of their fate is rather eternal loss of spiritual life than eternal hardening into active hostility to what is good, but none the less is it a sin unto death—an eternal sin. And while we may rejoice in the promises of Christ that those who have received eternal life from Him shall never perish,² we must look also at all the possibilities of declension and falling away which these passages open up to us, and take heed that we live steadfastly the life of faith and of service.

One awful consequence of all that we have been studying is—that it is only those who are within sound of the gospel, and who have experienced something of the workings of the Holy Spirit, that can be guilty of the eternal sin. Many questions have been raised as to the future destiny of the heathen. We

¹ Heb. x. 26.

² John x. 28.

can only say that they will be judged by the light which they have. We have no warrant to say that by that light they will be acquitted. This we know, they have not committed the eternal sin. They have not rejected the Word of God, they have not resisted the Spirit of God.

But those who have been born in a Christian land, who have heard the gospel, who may have been moved by its appeals, who may have experienced the stirrings of the Divine Spirit in their hearts, just because of their greater privileges may become guilty of a more awful sin. One of two things they must become—temples of the Holy Ghost, or blasphemers of the Holy Ghost—eternally united with the Spirit, or eternally devoid of the Spirit.

Many have thought themselves guilty of the eternal sin who were really very far from it. It is not a single isolated act. It is not being carried away by the sin that draws the mind within its power. There must be reflection and a fixed will. There will further be no acute pain, no keen regrets, no struggle to be free from sin, which imply still some desire for

holiness. Persons have often thought when they have experienced the feeling of anguish, remorse, and struggle against overpowering temptation, that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that the Spirit has ceased to strive with them. But the very pangs they experience are evidence that the Spirit is still striving with them, and that they can feel His power.

While some may think that they are guilty of this sin, when in fact they are far enough from it, others may think themselves far from it, when they are on the way to it or on the very brink of it. There may be general indifference. There may be an outward respect for religion and formal connection with the Church—as the Pharisees had—and yet indifference to all the truth heard, resistance to all appeals to real life for God. Then begins neglecting of ordinances, forsaking the assembling of God's people, the falling away which makes renewal unto eternal life impossible.¹

Let us remember that the beginnings of this sin may appear even in those who have been renewed, and who have the life of the Spirit.

¹ Heb. x. 25-27.

There may be resistance of the Spirit, there may be grieving the Spirit—from some prompting of the flesh or pride of the will there may be the doing of what we know is contrary to the mind of the Spirit. Let us remember that every such sin must bear its own punishment in weakened spiritual life, in loss of spiritual power—that every such sin makes it easier for a like sin to be committed again, and unless the Spirit asserts His power and prevails on our will, there may be finally the sin unto death.

And to realise our position, let us remember, what we have already seen, that the Holy Spirit is a person. He is not a gift that may be taken up and laid down at pleasure, not a faculty that may become weak by disuse and then be strengthened again by exercise. He acts according to His sovereign will. Let us deal with Him as with a sovereign Lord. Let us beware lest we so neglect Him and so grieve Him that He will depart from us never to return. Let us honour Him. Let us have communion with Him. Let us cherish Him as our guest, let us enthrone Him as our Lord, and so submit ourselves to His sway that the

life which He gives shall ever grow more living within us, that the power for service which He gives may ever grow stronger, and His almighty power may make the eternal sin impossible for us.

X

The Inspiration of the Bible

Every Scripture inspired of God. R. V.

All Scripture is inspired of God.—2 TIM. iii. 16.

*Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost.—2 PET.
i. 21.*

The Inspiration of the Bible

IT may seem that if the doctrine of the Holy Spirit I have been endeavouring to establish be true, it supersedes the need of an inspired book. If every disciple of Jesus Christ is born of the Holy Spirit; if, in addition to the new life thus imparted, he may expect a baptism of the Spirit, if he may receive special power and special guidance for any service to which he may be called, what need is there for such an external guide as the Bible claims to be? At all events, why should such authority be given to it, that a man's own spiritual perceptions and impulses should be tested by it as the only infallible rule?

Just because, as we have seen, the Spirit of God is not independent of the word of God. Where either individuals or communities have sought to be guided by the Spirit alone without the word, the result has been extravagance

and perversity, which showed that it was not the true Spirit that prompted them. What work of the Spirit, then, was there in these Scriptures, or rather in their writers, which gave them such a place and power that without them the work of the Spirit Himself in the heart of man is incomplete?

All our previous study will help us to answer this question. If the principles I have sought to deduce from the Bible with regard to the Holy Spirit and His working in man be true, the Bible itself must be an illustration of them, and its inspiration will be more easily understood from what we have learned with regard to the inspiration which every Christian may expect.

We have seen that in the work of man's salvation the two Paracletes, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, were needful—that from the work of creation on to the finished work of salvation the work of the one has never been complete without the other. This is as true of the Bible as of any other part of their work. And here I refer to the divine element in the Bible, not the human. The Bible has a human element in it as completely as Jesus

Christ had a human nature. The human element is the medium through which the divine has come; but it is only with the latter we have to do. And in this divine element we find the work of each of the two Paracletes. The work of the one Paraclete, Jesus Christ, is Revelation; the work of the other Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, is Inspiration. Revelation is the making known of God's purpose; Inspiration is the power which enables men to apprehend and declare that purpose.

The Revelation of God, of His law for man's life, of His purpose for man's salvation, we have in the Bible. The climax of that Revelation is Jesus Christ Himself. He was God incarnate as man, revealing to the world the character and purposes of God as they had never been revealed before. But He was the Word that was in the beginning with God, the Word by whom all things were made. His voice was heard in creation, it was uttered in providence, it was felt in the human conscience. In the Bible there is a perception of all of these modes of revelation, and it was possible for man under the ordinary operation of the

Spirit, or even with his natural powers unaided, to perceive them all. Paul gives it as an evidence of man's guilt that he might in all of these ways have known God, and yet remained ignorant of Him.¹

But there were other more special revelations, which God gave, designed to bring salvation to fallen man. He communicated His laws, His ordinances, His purposes for the future of the world and for man's salvation, to men whom He called to teach and lead His people. We are sometimes told how these revelations came—sometimes an angel spake, sometimes a vision was seen, sometimes a voice was heard. Generally we are merely told that "the word of the Lord came,"—a word which those who received it were conscious was not their own, but external to them. These were revelations, not inspirations; but by their inspiration those to whom they came had power to apprehend them.

When at last Jesus Christ came, He came in the fulness of time to give a revelation of God's will and purpose that might serve for all the ages—a revelation which, once put before the

¹ Rom. i. 20.

world, would enable men to know all that was needful for salvation. The whole Bible is thus more or less a revelation of Jesus Christ—telling of the preparation for His coming in the flesh, recording that coming, or applying it to the wants of human life and the guidance of His Church. And it is Jesus Christ the Eternal Word who in various ways has given this revelation.

The work of the Holy Spirit in the Bible is the inspiration of the men who were enabled to see and record this revelation. It might seem at first as though the natural powers of man, or at all events these powers quickened by the new birth, should suffice for this end. But it was not so : even in the case of the very fullest and most palpable revelation which the world has seen—that of Jesus Christ Himself—the world was not able to see incarnate God dwelling among them. Even His chosen companions, the apostles, could not understand this. Without the inspiration—though not without the teaching—of the Holy Spirit, they were able to come to the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of the living God ; but they could not understand the sig-

nificance of that belief. Their natural faculties, the opportunities they had of being with Christ, of seeing His works and hearing His words, fixed indeed the facts of His life on their minds, but it was only when the Holy Spirit came on them that they were enabled to see the divine revelation in that life.

We see, then, that in the Bible there are these two elements—the objective and the subjective, the truth revealed and the power to apprehend and to record that truth. The Word of God, the Word in creation, in conscience, in history, the Word communicated by various means to those who heard it, above all, the Word made flesh in Jesus Christ—that was the one element; and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost which enabled the writers of the Bible to hear, to see, and to give to men that Word—that was the other element.

What was the inspiration which enabled them so to do? What was the special power of the Spirit which enabled them to convey this word to man?

We have seen that there are two forms or stages in which the Spirit does His work in

man—the Birth and the Baptism. The former is the beginning of a new life in man, a transformation of his nature which will go on progressing. The latter is an endowment for service, especially for any service in the kingdom of God beyond that of the daily round of life. We have seen that such a baptism was needful for Jesus Christ Himself ere He began His Messianic work, and what was needful for the Master is needful also for the disciple. The apostles needed the baptism of Pentecost before they began their apostolic work, and to this day Christ's followers need the same baptism before they can do any effective work in Christ's kingdom. The power granted may vary according to the kind of work for which it is granted. We learn from the apostles what variety of gifts there were in the early Church, and we see varieties of gifts to the present day—all being gifts of the same Spirit, who divideth to every man severally as He will.

Now, Inspiration is of the nature of a Baptism of the Spirit. The inspiration of the Bible is the power given to its writers for the special work they had to do of recording the revelation they had received. In claiming

this for them we do not claim anything special in their endowment, we only claim for them a special work. We do not claim for them anything more than what every Christian worker may pray for and hope to receive, and without which he need not expect to be able to do effective Christian work. Thus every true Christian worker is inspired of the Holy Ghost. And so, in being subjects of the inspiration of the Spirit, the writers of the Scriptures are in line with all truly called to be workers in God's kingdom in all ages. Wherein they differ is in the nature of the work to which they were called.

Here let me fall back upon another truth which we have learned with regard to the Spirit. In speaking of Him as the Paraclete, we have seen that the meaning of that word is "one who is called to help another," and the work which the paraclete is called to do depends on the work which the other is called to do. The Holy Spirit is the Paraclete for all Christ's people. He is called to help them in their life and work; and the special help He gives will depend on the special work which they are called to do. All disciples are called

on to believe and to lead a godly life, and the Holy Spirit is called to help them in that life. Each may be called to some special service, and the Holy Spirit is called to help him in that service. The apostles were called to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit was called to give them power to bear witness. The writers of the Bible were called to record the revelation of God, and the Holy Spirit was called to enable them to write the record.

We can best understand the function of inspiration by confining our view first of all to its work in relation to Jesus Christ, for in Him the revelation was in definite, external, incarnate form. The story of the life of Jesus Christ we have in the four evangelists. Two of them were personal witnesses of most of the events and words which they record. The other two had their information from others. It is not our purpose, however, to investigate the historical sources of their narratives; what we have to ask is—What was the work which the Holy Spirit did in enabling them to write these narratives? And to ascertain this, we must first ask—What was the work which the evangelists were called on to do for the Church

and for the world? It was evidently to give a record of the work of Christ for man's salvation. And the work which the Holy Spirit was called on to do in them was to enable them to give this record effectually. He taught them what facts of Christ's life, what words of His teaching, needed to be made known and preserved for the salvation of the world. It is in the exaltation of this aim that we see the utter difference between their writings and ordinary biographies. There is an indifference to chronological order and exactitude of details, which would be fatal to other biographies. Attempts have been made to harmonise the various narratives, but no one has been successful. There are some of the miracles, for instance, the exact order and incidents of which it is impossible exactly to ascertain, but the great truth revealed in the miracle there is no difficulty in learning. Attempts to treat the books as chronological records have always been more or less failures; honest attempts to treat them as means of religious edification have always been successful.

We hear a great deal nowadays about the

historical Christ. The whole tendency of this age is to go back to Him as such. But it is not as the historical Christ that He is presented to us in the gospel. Occasionally the evangelists, specially Luke, do give historical references, but these are not given as anything important, merely as passing notes which might be satisfactory to some. The aim of the evangelists is rather to detach Christ from history, and to present those facts of His life and teaching which bring Him most directly into contact with the human soul; which will enable the sinner to see in Him an all-sufficient Saviour, and the disciple to see in Him a perfect teacher and guide. To carry out this aim they avoid as far as they possibly can, consistently with making the narrative intelligible, all reference to historical events and local custom. Let us take up any of the lives of Christ published nowadays, that are often so instructive and edifying, and we shall see how earnestly the writers strive to do all that the evangelists have not done—the care with which they draw the geographical features of the town of His boyhood and the land of His ministry—the attention given to the state of

Jewish society and religion—the study given to the state of the empire in which Galilee and Judea were provinces. All these things are most highly important for us to know. There are no facts more momentous in the world's history than the overthrow of the Jewish worship, and the overthrow of the Roman Empire, and the bearing which the life of Christ had on these events and the state of society that sprang out of them. But to mark and record these circumstances and events inspiration was not needed, human faculties and human observation were quite adequate; and human curiosity and human instincts were quite sufficient to secure that these should be marked and the appropriate lessons drawn from them. Hence there has been no attempt since the days of the evangelists to present the life of Christ, in which these historical surroundings have not been presented as a sort of background, and the incidents of Christ's life have been sought to be woven into them in some sort of historical sequence. There must have been some tremendous power guiding the evangelists to enable them to resist the temptation to present these details so dear to the

human mind, and to present instead a picture of Christ which men of all lands and all ages can claim as belonging to them, and supplying all that their highest spiritual nature craves for this life and for eternity. The Holy Spirit was given to the writers of the Gospels to enable them to see the facts in Christ's life that belong to salvation, and to restrain them from recording others which, however interesting to human curiosity, would have obscured the great aim of His advent, and would have diverted attention from it.

We need not suppose that the four evangelists were the only disciples who had this gift. The apostles had it primarily. They first had to bear witness to Christ, and to them first the Holy Spirit was promised to enable them to do so. Others, who were called to labour for the same end, received the same endowment. The specialty about the evangelists was that their record was written down and preserved. Thus they did the work which was given them to do: the Paraclete gave them the help they needed for the work to which they were called, and that was the inspiration which specially belonged to them. No one can be called to do

this work again, and therefore no one can be inspired to do it. The binding law in all Christ's followers is the revelation which came through Christ ; the Gospels inform us what that revelation is, and the inspiration of the evangelists taught them what to record in the Gospels.

The same principles may be carried out in considering the other books of the Bible. In the historical books of the Old Testament, and in the Acts in the New, there is a close analogy to the Gospels ; there was a historical revelation of the progress of God's kingdom—of the events leading up to its foundation, and of the principles on which it was organised, and the Holy Spirit taught the writers what were the facts that needed to be preserved for the instruction and guidance of the Church.

In the Epistles we have more of the subjective views of the writers, and they have therefore more analogy with modern discourses on theology and practical life. But we must here remember the call given to the writers. They had all more or less directly been instructed by Christ Himself ; they were called to interpret that teaching to the world and to adapt it to the

needs of mankind ; and as they were called to this, they had the Holy Spirit given them to enable them to do so according to the mind of Christ. So, if space allowed, we might examine in detail the prophetic parts of the New Testament designed to encourage the Church with the assured hope of final triumph, and the historical, didactic, and prophetic books of the Old Testament. We would see how each of the writers had a call to a special work, and received by inspiration the power he needed for that work of declaring the purposes of God or recording His dealings with man.

Thus, while the inspiration of the Holy Ghost is a power that may be given to all Christians, the inspiration given to the writers of the Bible was for a special work, that of recording revelation, and it gave their writings an authority such as no other writings can have. The great lesson we have learned from all our study of the work of the one Paraclete, the Holy Spirit, is to show that it cannot be independent of the work of the other Paraclete, Jesus Christ. The Eternal Word was revealed in Jesus Christ, and the Eternal Spirit blesses that revelation for man's salvation. To those

who had personally known Jesus Christ on earth, He could bless their personal knowledge ; to those who heard the story of the Saviour directly from these witnesses, He could bless the witness given. But to continue His work in the succeeding generations, the mere presence of tradition, with all its tendency to corruption and obscuring of the essentials, would have been inadequate. He needed a record of the revelation as clear and adequate as that which came to the first generation. Without that He would have been as a warrior without his sword. His first care was to forge the sword He needed for His work, and for this He inspired the writers of the Bible to write the Bible. They were inspired to forge the sword of the Spirit, others may be inspired to wield it. That illustrates the difference between the inspiration of the Bible writers and the inspiration of other disciples. The former was special, and cannot be repeated until a new sword is wanted.

The definition we have given of the inspiration of the Bible shows also how far it extends. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the

writers, to teach them what is needful for man's salvation and regeneration. In all that refers to these the Scriptures are inspired. But one necessary consequence is, that the authority of inspiration does not extend to questions beyond these—questions of science or history which come in incidentally in the conveying of the message of salvation. On the one hand, God has given man the natural faculties by which he may ascertain the truth on these points; and God does not give a special gift to enable man to do what he can do with his natural gifts.¹ The writers of the Bible were not called to teach men science; therefore the Holy Spirit would not give them power to know or teach the truths of

¹ Dr. George Adam Smith, in his masterly work on the *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*, has a most suggestive chapter on the Religion of Syria. In it, however, there is a short passage on Revelation, to some expressions in which I must take exception. He says: "On such evidence we believe the assertion of the prophets, that what made Israel distinct from her kinsfolk, and endowed her alone with the solution of the successive problems of history and with her high morality, was the knowledge of a real Being and intercourse with Him. This is what Revelation means. Revelation is not the promulgation of a law, nor the prediction of future events, nor 'the imparting to man of truths, which he could not find out for himself.' All these ideas of Revelation are modern, and proved false by the only true method of investigation into the nature of Revelation, viz. a comparison of Scripture with those heathen

science. And, on the other, to inspire men to teach the exact truth on these points would upset the minds of the generation to which it was given, and distract their minds from the great saving truths that were to be taught. We must look on the science of the Bible as simply the science of the age in which it was written, not as inspired science. There are some who speak of the science of the Bible as having the authority of inspiration, but they altogether mistake the purpose for which the Bible was given to man. And from this mistake religion has suffered; for scientific errors have been looked on as showing that inspiration is liable to err.

religions from which the religion of Israel sprang, but was so differentiated by the Spirit of God" (p. 33).

This passage, to say the least, is lacking in exact definition. "The knowledge of a real Being and intercourse with Him," are results of Revelation; but to make them a definition of Revelation is to define a cause by its effects. Again, if the religion of Israel was differentiated by the Spirit of God from those heathen religions from which it sprang, is not that just to say that the Spirit of God enabled Israel to learn truths which she could not learn of herself? The question of Revelation is a part of the whole question of the Supernatural in religion. Man needs a Power above himself to enable him to know what he cannot know of himself, as well as to do what he cannot do of himself. No definition of Revelation can be adequate, which does not take into account that Power and man's relation to it.

But all the evil, that has come from this, is far less than the evil that would have come from speaking to the men of the nineteenth century before Christ in the language of the nineteenth century after Christ—to say nothing as to the question whether the science of this latter will finally approve itself as true. It would have diverted men's minds from the great spiritual truth to be taught, and prevented them receiving it. The Holy Spirit did not deal with the science of the age to which He spoke except to give it its place as subordinate to the service of God. He left men with the natural powers He had given them to discover the truths with regard to the creation He had made, and taught them what with their natural powers they never could discover, the truth with regard to the Creator God, His will and His purposes for them. It did not matter much to the children of Israel to whom Moses was sent whether, as they had learned from their fathers, the world was made in six days, or whether, as modern geology teaches, it may have taken six million years. What it did matter to them to know was that the God who made the world was their God, that the Word that spoke in

creation was the Word that spoke to them, that the Spirit that brooded on creation was the same who guided them still. That is a truth which continues unchanged to the present day amid all the changes of science, and which, amid all the fresh discoveries which it makes, enables us to receive them as fresh light cast on the handiwork of the Creator.

The inspiration of the Bible, then, is the baptism of the Spirit which the writers had, enabling them to know and record the revelation of saving truth. Let us now ask what relation it had to their lives.

The power given to the sacred writers was, as we have seen, of the nature of a baptism or gift of the Spirit. That enabled them to know and record the truth; but, as we have seen before, it did not necessarily save them or purify their lives. For the sacred writers themselves it was needful that the Spirit should bless the truth which He taught them to record—that He should give them power to receive it and to walk according to it. It was possible, as we saw in studying the baptism of the Spirit, for them to resist the very truth which they

recorded, and not to walk according to its precepts. We get more than one indication of frailty among the apostles in the New Testament, and in Moses, David, and Solomon, and some of the prophets of the Old Testament. Most notably do we see it in the case of Balaam, who saw and declared the truth with a clearness and vividness unsurpassed by any Old Testament writer, and who yet lived and acted in most entire antagonism to that truth. I have already quoted his case to show that there may be the baptism of the Spirit without the new birth. There is, then, at least one of the writers in the Bible who was not born again — a solemn lesson that to enter the kingdom of God we need something more than mere enlightenment and power to receive and record revelations, and that for all that is essential for salvation our privileges are as great as those of the men who “spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost.” We can never do the same service for God and for His kingdom as they did, for we have not the opportunity or the call. We have no revelation to record. But equally with them we may apply that revelation to our own salvation, and by

means of it seek the salvation of others. While we thus affirm the divine authority of the word, we must neither exalt the writers too highly, nor estimate too lowly the work of the Spirit in each individual believer or in the Church as a whole. While we maintain the inspiration of the Bible, let us be careful of our own inspiration. Let us remember that it is only as the Holy Spirit teaches us that we shall be able to apprehend the great truths of salvation, which in the Word He has preserved for us.

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